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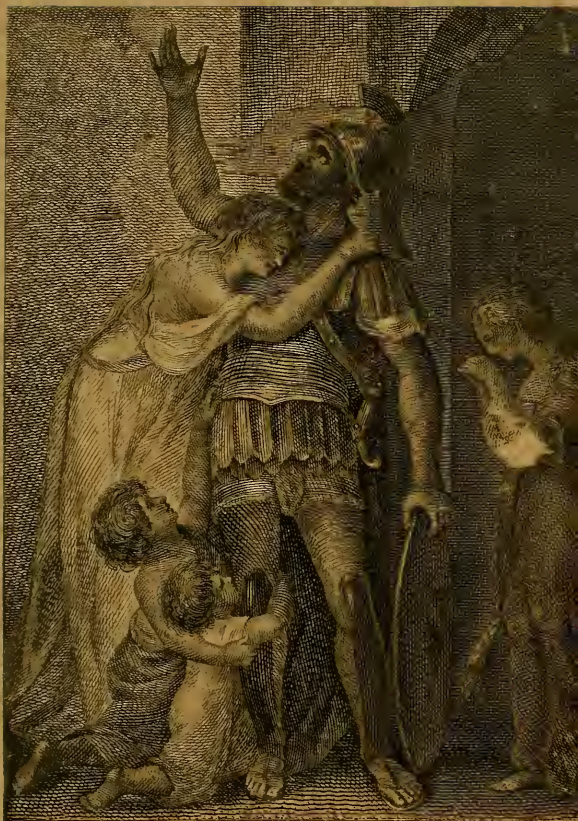
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LEONIDAS,

A POEM.







E. Kearny sc.

In speechless anguish, on the hero's breast
She sinks, On every side his children press,
Hang on his knees, and kiss his honour'd hand.

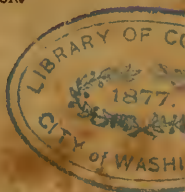
Leonidas, Book I

LEONIDAS,

A POEM,

BY RICHARD GLOVER.

From the Sixth London edition.



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THE PREFACE.

TO illustrate the following poem, to vindicate the subject from the censure of improbability, and to shew by the concurring evidence of the best historians, that such disinterested public virtue did once exist, I have thought it would not be improper to prefix the subsequent narration.

While Darius, the father of Xerxes, was yet on the throne of Persia, Cleomenes and Demaratus were kings in Lacedæmon, both descended from Hercules. Demaratus was unfortunately exposed by an uncertain rumour, which rendered his legitimacy suspected, to the malice and treachery of his colleague, who had conceived a personal resentment against him; for Cleomenes, taking advantage of this report, persuaded the Spartans to examine into the birth of Demaratus, and refer the difficulty to the oracle of Delphi; and was assisted in his perfidious designs by a near relation of Demaratus, named Leutychides, who aspired to succeed him in his dignity. Cleomenes found means to corrupt the priestess of Delphi, who declared Demaratus not legitimate. Thus by the base practices of his colleague, Cleomenes, and of his kinsman, Leutychides, Demaratus was expelled from his regal office in the commonwealth, a Lacedæmonian, distinguished in action and counsel, and the only king of Sparta, who by obtaining the Olympic prize in the chariot-race had increased the lustre of his country. He went into voluntary banishment, and, retiring to Asia, was there protected by Darius; while Leutychides succeeded to the regal authority in Sparta. Upon the death of Cleomenes, Leonidas became king, who ruled in conjunction with this Leutychides, when

Xerxes, the son of Darius, invaded Greece. The number of land and naval forces, which accompanied that monarch, together with the servants, women, and other usual attendants on the army of an eastern prince, amounted to upwards of five millions, as reported by Herodotus who wrote within a few years after the event, and publicly recited his history at the Olympic games. In this general assembly not only from Greece itself, but from every part of the world, wherever a colony of Grecians was planted, had he greatly exceeded the truth, he must certainly have been detected, and censured by some among so great a multitude; and such a voluntary falsehood must have entirely destroyed that merit and authority, which have procured to Herodotus the veneration of all posterity, with the appellation of the father of history. On the first news of this attempt on their liberty, a convention, composed of deputies from the several states of Greece, was immediately held at the Isthmus of Corinth to consult on proper measures for the public safety. The Spartans also sent messengers to enquire of the oracle at Delphi into the event of the war, who returned with an answer from the priestess of Apollo, that either a king, descended from Hercules, must die, or Lacedæmon would be entirely destroyed. Leonidas immediately offered to sacrifice his life for the preservation of Lacedæmon; and, marching to Thermopylæ, possessed himself of that important pass with three hundred of his countrymen; who with the forces of some other cities in the Peloponnesus together with the Thebans, Thespians, and the troops of those states, which adjoined to Thermopylæ, composed an army of near eight thousand men.

Xerxes was now advanced, as far as Thessalia; when hearing, that a small body of Grecians was assembled at Thermopylæ, with some Lacedæmonians at their head, and among the rest Leonidas, a descendant of Hercules, he dispatched a single horseman before to observe their numbers, and discover their designs. When this

horseman approached, he could not take a view of the whole camp, which lay concealed behind a rampart, formerly raised by the Phocians at the entrance of Thermopylæ, on the side of Greece; so that his whole attention was engaged by those who were on guard before the wall, and who at that instant chanced to be the Lacedæmonians. Their manner and gestures greatly astonished the Persian. Some were amusing themselves in gymnastic exercises; others were combing their hair; and all discovered a total disregard of him, whom they suffered to depart, and report to Xerxes, what he had seen: which appearing to that prince quite ridiculous, he sent for Demaratus, who was with him in the camp, and required him to explain this strange behaviour of his countrymen. Demaratus informed him, that it was a custom among the Spartans to comb down and adjust their hair, when they were determined to fight till the last extremity. Xerxes notwithstanding, in the confidence of his power sent ambassadors to the Grecians to demand their arms, to bid them disperse, and become his friends and allies; which proposals being received with disdain, he commanded the Medes and Cissians to seize on the Grecians, and bring them alive into his presence. These nations immediately attacked the Grecians, and were soon repulsed with great slaughter; fresh troops still succeeded; but with no better fortune than the first, being opposed to an enemy not only superior in valour and resolution, but who had the advantage of discipline, and were furnished with better arms both offensive and defensive.

Plutarch in his Laconic apothegms reports, that the Persian king offered to invest Leonidas with the sovereignty of Greece, provided he would join his arms to those of Persia. This offer was too considerable a condescension to have been made before a trial of their force, and must therefore have been proposed by Xerxes after such a series of ill success, as might probably have depressed the insolence of his temper; and it may

he easily admitted, that the virtue of Leonidas was proof against any temptations of that nature. Whether this be a fact or not, thus much is certain, that Xerxes was reduced to extreme difficulties by this resolute defence of Thermopylæ; till he was extricated from his distress by a Malian, named Epialtes, who conducted twenty thousand of the Persian army into Greece, through a pass which lay higher up the country among the mountains of Oeta: whereas the passage at Thermopylæ was situated on the the sea-shore between those mountains and the Malian bay. The defence of the upper pass had been committed to a thousand Phocians, who upon the first sight of the enemy inconsiderately abandoned their station, and put themselves in array upon a neighbouring eminence; but the Persians wisely avoided an engagement, and with the utmost expedition marched to Thermopylæ.

Leonidas no sooner received information, that the Barbarians had passed the mountains, and would soon be in a situation to surround him, than he commanded the allies to retreat, reserving the three hundred Spartans, and four hundred Thebans, whom, as they followed him with reluctance at first, he now compelled to stay. But the Thespians, whose number amounted to seven hundred, would not be persuaded by Leonidas to forsake him. Their commander was Demophilus, and the most eminent amongst them for his valour was Dithyrambus, the son of Harmatides. Among the Lacedæmonians the most conspicuous next to Leonidas was Dieneces, who being told, that the multitude of Persian arrows would obscure the sun, replied, the battle would then be in the shade. Two brothers, named Alpheus and Maron, are also recorded for their valour, and were Lacedæmonians. Megistias a priest, by birth an Acarnanian and held in high honor at Sparta, refused to desert Leonidas, though entreated by him to consult his safety; but sent away his only son, and remained himself behind to die with the Lacedæmonians.

Herodotus relates, that Leonidas drew up his men in the broadest part of Thermopylæ; where, being encompassed by the Persians, they fell with great numbers of their enemies: but Plutarch, Diodorus Siculus, and others affirm, that the Grecians attacked the very camp of Xerxes in the night. Both these dispositions are reconcileable to probability. He might have made an attack on the Persian camp in the night, and in the morning withdrawn his forces back to Thermopylæ where they would be enabled to make the most obstinate resistance, and sell their lives upon the dearest terms. The action is thus described by Diodorus. "The Grecians, having now rejected all thoughts of safety, preferring glory to life, unanimously called on their general to lead them against the Persians, before they could be apprised that their friends had passed round the mountains. Leonidas embraced the occasion, which the ready zeal of his soldiers afforded, and commanded them forthwith to dine, as men, who were to sup in Elysium. Himself in consequence of this command took a repast, as the means to furnish strength for a long continuance, and to give perseverance in danger. After a short refreshment the Grecians were now prepared, and received orders to assail the enemies in their camp, to put all they met to the sword, and force a passage to the royal pavilion; when, formed into one compact body with Leonidas himself at their head, they marched against the Persians, and entered their camp at the dead of night. The Barbarians, wholly unprepared, and blindly conjecturing, that their friends were defeated, and themselves attacked by the united power of Greece, hurry together from their tents with the utmost disorder and consternation. Many were slain by Leonidas and his party, but much greater multitudes by their own troops to whom in the midst of this blind confusion they were not distinguishable from enemies; for as night took away the power of discerning truly, and the tumult was spread universally over the camp, a prodigious slaughter must naturally ensue. The want of command, of a

watch-word, and of confidence in themselves, reduced the Persians to such a state of confusion, that they destroyed each other without distinction. Had Xerxes continued in the royal pavilion, the Grecians without difficulty might have brought the war to a speedy conclusion by his death; but he at the beginning of the tumult betook himself to flight with the utmost precipitation; when the Grecians, rushing into the tent, put to the sword most of those who were left behind: then, while night lasted, they ranged through the whole camp in diligent search of the tyrant. When morning appeared the Persians, perceiving the true state of things, held the inconsiderable number of their enemies in contempt; yet were so terrified at their valour, that they avoided a near engagement; but inclosing the Grecians on every side, showered their darts and arrows upon them at a distance, and in the end destroyed their whole body. In this manner fell the Grecians, who under the conduct of Leonidas defended the pass of Thermopylæ. All must admire the virtue of these men, who with one consent, maintaining the post allotted by their country, cheerfully renounced their lives for the common safety of Greece, and esteemed a glorious death more eligible, than to live with dishonor. Nor is the consternation of the Persians incredible. Who among those Barbarians could have conjectured such an event? Who could have expected, that five hundred men would have dared to attack a million? Wherefore shall not all posterity reflect on the virtue of these men, as the object of imitation, who, though the loss of their lives was the necessary consequence of their undertaking, were yet unconquered in their spirit; and among all the great names, delivered down to remembrance, are the only heroes, who obtained more glory in their fall, than others from the brightest victories? With justice may they be deemed the preservers of the Grecian liberty, even preferably to those, who were conquerors in the battles fought afterwards with Xerxes; for the memory of that valour, exerted in the defence of Thermopylæ, for ever deject-

ed the Barbarians, while the Greeks were fired with emulation to equal such a pitch of magnanimity. Upon the whole, there never were any before these, who attained to immortality through the meer excess of virtue; whence the praise of their fortitude hath not been recorded by historians only, but hath been celebrated by numbers of poets, among others by Simonides the lyric."

Pausanias, in his *Laconics*, considers the defence of Thermopylæ by Leonidas, as an action superior to any achieved by his cotemporaries, and to all the exploits of preceding ages. "Never (says he) had Xerxes beheld Greece, and laid in ashes the city of Athens, had not his forces under Hydarnes been conducted through a path over mount Oeta; and, by that means encompassing the Greeks, overcome and slain Leonidas." Nor is it improbable, that such a commander at the head of such troops should have maintained his post in so narrow a pass, till the whole army of Xerxes had perished by famine. At the same time his navy had been miserably shattered by a storm, and worsted in an engagement with the Athenians at Artemisium.

To conclude, the fall of Leonidas and his brave companions, so meritorious to their country, and so glorious to themselves, hath obtained such a high degree of veneration and applause from passed ages, that few among the ancient compilers of history have been silent on this amazing instance of magnanimity, and zeal for liberty; and many are the epigrams and inscriptions now extant, some on the whole body, others on particulars, who died at Thermopylæ, still preserving their memory in every nation conversant with learning, and at this distance of time still rendering their virtue the object of admiration and of praise.

I shall now detain the reader no longer, than to take this public occasion of expressing my sincere regard for

the Lord Viscount Cobham, and the sense of my obligations for the early honor of his friendship; to him I inscribe the following poem; and herein I should be justified, independent of all personal motives, from his Lordship's public conduct, so highly distinguished by his disinterested zeal, and unshaken fidelity to his country, not less in civil life, than in the field: to him therefore a poem, founded on a character eminent for military glory, and love of liberty, is due from the nature of the subject.

R. GLOVER.

RICHARD GLOVER.

MR. GLOVER, the author of the celebrated poem of *Leonidas*, was born in London, and was the son of John Glover, Esq. an eminent Hamburgh merchant; who married Miss West, sister of the Right Honourable Richard West, Lord Chancellor of Ireland. Mr. Glover's uncle being in that high station, it was originally intended that he should be brought up to the law; but the Lord Chancellor dying when his nephew was very young, the plan was altered, and he was brought up to his father's profession.

Mr. Glover, by a lady he married (Miss Nunn) of the county of Essex, and with whom he received a considerable fortune, had three children; a daughter, who died young; Captain Glover, who died in the service of his country off the island of Jamaica, commanding his Majesty's ship *Janus*; and Richard, his surviving son, who served in the last parliament for the borough of Penryn in Cornwall.

He received the whole of his education under the Reverend Daniel Sanxay at Cheam School; a place which he afterwards delighted to visit, and sometimes attended the anniversary held of late years in London, where he seemed happy in relating his juvenile adventures. At this seminary he distinguished himself by the quickness of his progress, and early began to exhibit specimens of his poetical powers.

As a merchant he soon made a conspicuous figure; but his commercial affairs did not occupy his whole attention; he still found leisure to cultivate the study of poetry, and continued to associate with those who were eminent in literature and science. One of his earliest friends was Green, the ingenious, though obscure, author

of that truly original poem entitled the 'Spleen,' which, in 1737, soon after his death, was published by Mr. Glover. This excellent performance contains the following passage of his literary eminence, with an evident allusion to his Leonidas, which he had begun when very young.

But there's a youth that you can name,
 Who needs no leading-strings to fame,
 Whose quick maturity of brain
 The birth of Pallas may explain:
 Dreaming of whose depending fate,
 I heard Melpomene debate;
 This, this is he that was foretold
 Should emulate our Greeks of old;
 Inspir'd by me with sacred art,
 He sings, and rules the varied heart;
 If Jove's dread anger he rehearse,
 We hear the thunder in his verse;
 If he describe love turn'd to rage,
 The furies riot on his page;
 If he fair liberty and law,
 By ruffian pow'r expiring, draw,
 The keener passions then engage
 Aright, and sanctify their rage;
 If he attempt disastrous love,
 We hear those plaints that wound the grove;
 Within the kinder passions glow,
 And tears, distill'd from pity, flow.

The observation made upon Gray, by his friend the late Earl of Oxford, 'that he never was a boy,' has been applied to Glover. At the early age of 16 he wrote

A Poem to the Memory of Sir Isaac Newton; which was followed by

Leonidas, first printed in 1737.

London, or the Progress of Commerce, a poem not unworthy of the author of Leonidas.

Hosier's Ghost, one of the most pathetic and beautiful ballads in our language.

Boadicea and Medea, tragedies, performed both with much applause.

And the Athenaid, or a sequel to Leonidas, and forming a counterpart to it, in thirty books, presented to the world, with a few alterations from the pen of a friend, in the year 1788.

He also wrote a second part of Medea, not yet performed.

Leonidas was inscribed to Lord Cobham, and, on its first appearance, was received by the public with great applause.

At the time of its publication a zeal, or rather rage, for liberty prevailed in England. A constellation of great men, distinguished by their virtues as well as by their talents, set themselves in opposition to the court. Every species of composition that bore the sacred name of freedom recommended itself to their protection, and soon obtained possession of the public favor; hence a poem founded on the noblest principles of liberty, and displaying the most brilliant examples of patriotism, soon found its way into the world. It was praised in the warmest terms by Lyttleton and Doctor Pemberton, and passed through three editions in 1737 and 1738; but, as its favorable reception was not founded entirely on its intrinsic merit, it experienced afterwards, without deserving it, the fate of those literary productions, which are indebted for a temporary celebrity to the influence of party principles.

It first came out in nine books; but in the last edition published by the author (in 1770) was extended to twelve; and had also several new characters added, besides placing the old ones in new situations. The improvements were very considerable; but the public attention was not sufficiently alive to recompense the pains bestowed on this once popular performance.

Though not in the highest class of epic poems, it cannot be read without delight. It is characterized by a bold spirit of liberty, by generous, tender, and noble sentiments. The author every where appears a virtu-

ous man and a good citizen. The characters are finely discriminated, as is justly exemplified in Dr. Pemberton's learned commentary; and the style possesses many poetical graces, though it is sometimes familiar and prosaic. It abounds in the affecting, the tender, and the beautiful, rather than in the heroic and sublime. The parting of Leonidas and his wife is perhaps more interesting than that of Hector and Andromache. The episode of Ariana and Teribazus is poetical and pleasing. On the whole we may safely venture to place Leonidas by the side of Lucan's *Pharsalia*, Statius's *Thebaid*, Camoen's *Lusiad*, and the *Henriade* of Voltaire.

Mr. Glover passed a great portion of his time with Mr. Pitt, afterwards Earl of Chatham, Mr. George Lyttleton, afterwards Lord Lyttleton, Earl Temple, Lord Cobham, and many others of the same principles; his connexion with whom introduced him to the notice of Frederick Prince of Wales, who honoured him with his friendship, and distinguished him by his countenance and patronage.

His talents for public speaking, his knowledge of political affairs, and his information concerning trade and commerce, pointed him out to the merchants of London as a proper person to conduct their application to parliament, on the subject of the neglect of their trade. He accepted the office; and in summing up the evidence gave very striking proofs of his oratorical powers. This remarkable speech was pronounced at the bar of the House of Commons, January 27, 1742, and soon afterwards published under the title of 'A short account of the late application to parliament made by the merchants of London, upon the neglect of their trade, with the evidence thereupon, as summed up by Mr. Glover.' By his appearance in behalf of the merchants of London he acquired, and with great justice, the character of an able and steady patriot; and indeed, on every occasion, he shewed his zeal for the commercial interests of the nation, as well as his attachment to the welfare

of his countrymen in general, and that of the city of London in particular.

Our author, being induced by the importunity of his friends, offered himself in the year 1751 as a candidate for the place of Chamberlain of the city of London, in opposition to the late Thomas Harrison, Esq. Unfortunately for him he did not declare his intention till most of the livery had engaged their votes; to which circumstance was ascribed the loss of his election. On this occasion he addressed the livery in a very manly and animated speech.

In the parliament which met at the accession of his present majesty (1761), he was elected for Weymouth. He undertook to manage the interests of the merchants and traders of London concerned in the trade to Germany and Holland, and of the dealers in foreign linens, in their application to Parliament in May 1774. Both the speeches made on these occasions were published within the same year.

In 1775 he engaged on behalf of the West-India merchants, in their application to parliament, examined the witnesses, and summed up the evidence in the same masterly manner he had done on a former occasion. For the assistance he afforded the merchants in this business he was complimented by them with a service of plate, of the value of 300*l*. The speech which he delivered in the house, was printed in that year.— This was the last opportunity he had of displaying in public his oratorical talents. Having now arrived at a period of life which demanded a recess from business, he retired, and wore out the remainder of his days with dignity and with honour, in the exercise of the virtues of private life, and in his attention to his muse. He died at his house in Albemarle-street, November 25, 1785, in the 75th year of his age, and was buried in the family vault in St. Edmund the King's in Lombard-street.

We shall conclude this short account of the life and writings of our Author by the following observations upon Leonidas from the pen of Lyttleton.

"Since I have read Leonidas," says he (*Common Sense*, No. 10). "I have been so full of all the beauties I met with in it, that, to give some vent, I found it necessary to write to you, and invite my countrymen to take part with me in the pleasure of admiring what so justly deserves their admiration. And in doing this I have yet a further view; I desire to do them good as well as please them; for never yet was an epic poem wrote with so noble and so useful a design; the whole plan and purpose of it being to shew the superiority of freedom over slavery; and how much virtue, public spirit, and the love of liberty, are preferable, both in their nature and effects, to riches, luxury, and the insolence of power.

"This great and instructive moral is set forth by an action the most proper to illustrate it of all that ancient or modern history can afford, enforced by the most sublime spirit of poetry, and adorned by all the charms of an active and warm imagination, under the restraint of a cool and sober judgment.

"And it has another special claim to protection; for, I will venture to say, there never was an epic poem which had so near a relation as this to common sense; the author of it not having allowed himself the liberty, so largely taken by his predecessors, of making excursions beyond the bounds, and out of sight of it, into the airy regions of poetical mythology. There are neither fighting gods, nor scolding goddesses; neither miracles, nor enchantments; neither monsters, nor giants, in his work; but whatsoever human nature can afford that is most astonishing, marvellous, and sublime.

"And it has this particular merit to recommend it; that though it has quite the air of an ancient epic poem, there is not so much as a single simile in it that is borrowed from any of the ancients; and yet, I believe there is hardly any poem that has such a variety of beautiful comparisons; so just a confidence had the author in the extent and rich abundance of his own imagination.

"The artful conduct of the principal design; the skill in connecting and adapting every episode to the carrying on and serving that design; the variety of characters, the great care to keep them, and distinguish each from the other by a propriety of sentiment and thought; all these are excellencies which the best judges of poetry will be particularly pleased with in Leonidas.

"Upon the whole, I look upon this poem as one of those few of distinguished worth and excellence, which will be handed down with respect to all posterity, and which, in the long revolution of past centuries, but two or three countries have been able to produce. And I cannot help congratulating my own, that, after having in the last age brought forth a Milton, she has in this produced two more such poets as we have the happiness to see flourish together; I mean Mr. Pope and Mr. Glover."



LEONIDAS.

BOOK I.

THE ARGUMENT.

XERXES, king of Persia, having drawn together the whole force of his empire, and pass'd over the Hellespont into Thrace, with a design to conquer Greece, the deputies from the several states of that country, who had some time before assembled themselves at the Isthmus of Corinth, to deliberate on proper measures for resisting the invader, were no sooner apprized of his march into Thrace, than they determined without further delay to dispute his passage at the streights of Thermopylæ, the most accessible part of Greece on side of the Thrace and Thessaly. Alpheus, one of the deputies from Sparta, repairs to that city, and communicates this resolution to his countrymen; who chanced that day to be assembled in expectation of receiving an answer from Apollo, to whom they had sent a messenger to consult about the event of the war. Leutychides, one of their two kings, counsels the people to advance no farther than the Isthmus of Corinth, which separates the Peloponnesus, where Lacedæmon was situated, from the rest of Greece; but Leonidas, the other king, dissuades them from it. Agis, the messenger, who had been deputed to Delphi, and brother to the queen of Leonidas, returns with the oracle; which denounces ruin to the Lacedæmonians, unless one of their kings lays down his life for the public. Leonidas offers himself for the victim. Three hundred more are appointed, all citizens of Sparta, and heads of families, to accompany and die with him at Thermopylæ. Alpheus returns to the Isthmus. Leonidas, after an interview with his queen departs from Lacedæmon. At the end of six days he encamps near the Isthmus, when he is join'd by Alpheus; who describes the auxiliaries, then waiting at the Isthmus, those, who are already possessed of Thermopylæ, as also the pass itself; and concludes with relating the captivity of his brother Polydorus in Persia.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK I.

THE virtuous Spartan, who resign'd his life
To save his countiy at th' Oetæan streights,
Thermopylæ, when all the peopled east
In arms with Xerxes fill'd the Grecian plains,
O Muse, record. The Hellespont they pass'd,
O'erpow'ring Thrace. The dreadful tidings swift
To Corinth flew. Her Isthmus was the seat
Of Grecian council. Alpheus thence returns
To Lacedæmon. In assembly full
He finds the Spartan people with their kings;
Their kings, who boast an origin divine,
From Hercules descended. They the sons
Of Lacedæmon had conven'd to learn
The sacred mandates of th' immortal gods,
Tha timorn expected from the Delphian dome.
But Alpheus sudden their attention drew,
And thus address'd them. ' For immediate war,
My countrymen, prepare. Barbarian tents
Already fill the trembling bounds of Thrace.
The Isthmian council hath decreed to guard
Thermopylæ, the Locrian gate of Greece.'

Here Alpheus paus'd. Leutychides, who shar'd
With great Leonidas the sway, uprose
And spake. ' Ye citizens of Sparta, hear.
Why from her bosom should Laconia send
Her valiant race to wage a distant war
Beyond the Isthmus? There the gods have plac'd
Our native barrier. In this favor'd land,
Which Pelops govern'd, us of Doric blood
That Isthmus inaccessible secures.
There let our standards rest. Your solid strength
If once you scatter in defence of states

Remote and feeble, you betray your own,
 And merit Jove's derision.' With assent
 The Spartans heard. Leonidas reply'd.

'O most ungen'rous counsel! Most unwise!
 Shall we, confining to that Isthmian fence
 Our efforts, leave beyond it ev'ry state
 Disown'd, expos'd? Shall Athens, while her fleets
 Unceasing watch th' innumerable foes,
 And trust th' impending dangers of the field
 To Sparta's well-known valour, shall she hear
 That to Barbarian violence we leave
 Her unprotected walls? Her hoary sires,
 Her helpless matrons, and their infant race
 To servitude and shame? Her guardian gods
 Will yet preserve them. Neptune o'er his main
 With Pallas, pow'r of wisdom, at their helms
 Will soon transport them to a happier clime,
 Safe from insulting foes, from false allies,
 And eleuthrian Jove will bless their flight.
 Then shall we feel the unresisted force
 Of Persia's navy, deluging our plains
 With inexhausted numbers. Half the Greeks,
 By us betray'd to bondage, will support
 A Persian lord, and lift th' avenging spear
 For our destruction.¹ But, my friends, reject
 Such mean, such dang'rous counsels, which would blast
 Your long-establish'd honors, and assist
 The proud invader. O eternal king
 Of gods and mortals, elevate our minds!
 Each low and partial passion thence expel!
 Greece is our gen'ral mother. All must join
 In her defence, or sep'rate each must fall.

This said, authority and shame controll'd
 The mute assembly. Agis too appear'd.
 He from the Delphian cavern was return'd,
 Where, taught by Phœbus on Parnassian cliffs;
 The Pythian maid unfolded heav'n's decrees,

He came, but discontent and grief o'ercast
 His anxious brow. Reluctant was his tongue,
 Yet seem'd full charg'd to speak. Religious dread
 Each heart relax'd. On ev'ry visage hung
 Sad expectation. Not a whisper told
 The silent fear. Intensely all were fix'd,
 All still, as death, to hear the solemn tale.
 As o'er the western waves, when ev'ry storm
 Is hush'd within its cavern, and a breeze,
 Soft-breathing, lightly with its wings along
 The slacken'd cordage glides, the sailor's ear
 Perceives no sound throughout the vast expanse;
 None, but the murmurs of the sliding prow,
 Which slowly parts the smooth and yielding main:
 So through the wide and listning croud no sound,
 No voice, but thine. O Agis, broke the air;
 While thus the issue of thy awful charge
 Thy lips deliver'd. 'Spartans, in your name
 I went to Delphi. I enquir'd the doom
 Of Lacedæmon from th' impending war,
 When in these words the deity reply'd.

"Inhabitants of Sparta, Persia's arms
 Shall lay your proud and ancient seat in dust;
 Unless a king, from Hercules deriv'd,
 Cause Lacedæmon for his death to mourn."

As, when the hand of Perseus had disclos'd
 The snakes of dire Medusa, all, who view'd,
 The Gorgon features, were congeal'd to stone,
 With ghastly eyeballs, on the hero bent,
 And horror, living in their marble form;
 Thus with amazement rooted, where they stood,
 In speechless terror frozen, on their kings
 The Spartans gaz'd: but soon their anxious looks
 All on the great Leonidas unite,
 Long known his country's refuge. He alone
 Remains unshaken. Rising, he displays
 His god-like presence. Dignity and grace
 Adorn his frame, where manly beauty joins

With strength Herculean. On his aspect shine
 Sublimest virtue and desire of fame,
 Where justice gives the laurel, in his eye
 The inextinguishable spark, which fires
 The souls of patriots; while his brow supports
 Undaunted valour, and contempt of death.
 Serene he cast his looks around and spake.

‘Why this astonishment on ev’ry face,
 Ye men of Sparta? Does the name of death
 Create this fear and wonder? O my friends,
 Why do we labour through the arduous paths,
 Which lead to virtue? Fruitless were the toil,
 Above the reach of human feet were plac’d
 The distant summit; if the fear of death
 Could intercept our passage. But a frown
 Of unavailing terror he assumes
 To shake the firmness of a mind which knows,
 That, wanting virtue, life is pain and woe,
 That, wanting liberty, ev’n virtue mourns,
 And looks around for happiness in vain.
 Then speak, O Sparta, and demand my life.
 My heart, exulting, answers to thy call,
 And smiles on glorious fate. To live with fame
 The gods allow to many; but to die
 With equal lustre is a blessing, Jove
 Among the choicest of his boons reserves,
 Which but on few his sparing hand bestows.’

Salvation thus to Sparta he proclaim’d.
 Joy, wrapt awhile in admiration, paus’d,
 Suspending praise; nor praise at last resounds
 In high acclaim to rend the arch of heav’n:
 A reverential murmur breathes applause.
 So were the pupils of Lyncurgus train’d
 To bridle nature. Public fear was dumb
 Before their senate, ephori and kings,
 Nor exultation into clamour broke.
 Amidst them rose Dieneces, and thus.

'Haste to Thermopylae. To Xerxes shew
 The discipline of Spartans, long renown'd
 In rigid warfare, with enduring minds,
 Which neither pain, nor want, nor danger bend.
 Fly to the gate of Greece, which open stands
 To slavery and rapine. They will shrink
 Before your standard, and their native seats
 Resume in abject Asia. Arm, ye sires,
 Who with a growing race have bless'd the state.
 That race, your parents, gen'ral Greece forbid
 Delay. Heav'n summons. Equal to the cause
 A chief behold. Can Spartans ask for more?"

Bold Alpheus next. 'Command my swift return
 Amid the Isthmian council to declare
 Your instant march.' His distates all approve.
 Back to the Isthmus he unweari'd speeds.

Now from th' assembly with majestic steps
 Forth moves their god-like king, with conscious worth
 His gen'rous bosom glowing. Such the port
 Of his divine progenitor; impell'd
 By ardent virtue, so Alcides trod
 Invincible to face in horrid war
 The triple form of Geryon, or against
 The bulk of huge Antæus match his strength.

Say, Muse, what heroes, by example fir'd,
 Nor less by honor, offer'd now to bleed?
 Dienece the foremost, brave and staid,
 Of vet'ran skill to range in martial fields
 Well-order'd lines of battle. Maron next,
 'Twin-born with Alpheus, shews his manly frame.
 Him Agis follow'd, brother to the queen
 Of great Leonidas, his friend, in war
 His try'd companion. Graceful were his steps,
 And gentle his demeanour. Still his soul
 Preserv'd the purest virtue, though refin'd
 By arts unknown to Lacedæmon's race.
 High was his office. He, when Sparta's weal

Support and counsel from the gods requir'd,
 Was sent the hallow'd messenger to learn
 Their mystic will, in oracles declar'd,
 From rocky Delphi, from Dodona's shade,
 Or sea-encircled Delos, or the cell
 Of dark Trophonius, round Bœotia known.
 Three hundred more compleat th' intrepid band,
 Illustrious fathers all of gen'rous sons,
 The future guardians of Laconia's state.
 Then rose Megistias, leading forth his son,
 Young Menalippus. Not of Spartan blood
 Were they. Megistias, heav'n-enlighten'd seer,
 Had left his native, Acarnanian shore;
 Along the border of Eurotas chose
 His place of dwelling. For his worth receiv'd,
 And hospitably cherish'd, he the wreath
 Pontific bore in Lacedæmon's camp,
 Serene in danger, nor his sacred arm
 From warlike toil secluding, nor untaught
 To wield the sword, and poise the weighty spear.

But to his home Leonidas retir'd.
 There calm in secret thought he thus explor'd
 His mighty soul, while nature in his breast
 A short emotion rais'd. 'What sudden grief,
 What cold reluctance now unmans my heart,
 And whispers, that I fear? Can death dismay
 Leonidas; death, often seen and scorn'd,
 When clad most dreadful in the battle's front?
 Or to relinquish life in all its pride,
 With all my honors, blooming round my head,
 Repines my soul, or rather to forsake,
 Eternally forsake my weeping wife,
 My infant offspring, and my faithful friends?
 Leonidas, awake. Shall these withstand
 The public safety? Hark, thy country calls.
 O sacred voice, I hear thee. At the sound
 Reviving virtue brightens in my heart;
 Fear vanishes before her. Death, receive

My unreluctant hand. Immortal fame.
Thou too, attendant on my righteous, fall,
With wings unweary'd wilt protect my tomb.'

His virtuous soul the hero had confirm'd.
When Agis enter'd. 'If my tardy lips,'
He thus began, 'have hitherto forborne
To bring their grateful tribute of applause,
Which, as a Spartan, to thy worth I owe;
Forgive the brother of thy queen. Her grief
Detain'd me from thee. O unequall'd man,
Though Lacedæmon call thy prime regard,
Forget not her, sole victim of distress
Amid the gen'ral safety. To assuage
Such pain fraternal tenderness is weak.'

The king embrac'd him, and reply'd. 'O best,
O dearest man, conceive not, but my soul
To her is fondly bound, from whom my days
Their largest share of happiness deriv'd.
Can I, who yield my breath, lest others mourn,
Lest thousands should be wretched, when she pines,
More lov'd, than any, tho' less dear, than all.
Can I neglect her griefs? In future days,
If thou with grateful memory record
My name and fate, O Sparta, pass not this
Unheeded by. The life, for thee resign'd,
Knew not a painful hour to tire my soul,
Nor were they common joys, I left behind.'

So spake the patriot, and his heart o'erflow'd
In tend'rest passion. Then in eager haste
The faithful partner of his bed he sought.
Amid her weeping children sat the queen
Immovable and mute. Her swimming eyes
Bent to the earth. Her arms were folded o'er
Her lab'ring bosom, blotted with her tears.
As, when a dusky mist involves the sky,
The moon through all the dreary vapours spreads

The radiant vesture of her silver light
 O'er the dull face of nature; so the queen,
 Divinely graceful shining through her grief,
 Brighten'd the cloud of woe. Her lord approach'd.
 Soon, as in gentlest phrase his well-known voice
 Awak'd her drooping spirit, for a time
 Care was appeas'd. She lifts her languid head.
 She gives this utt'rance to her tender thoughts.

'O Thou, whose presence is my sole delight;
 If thus, Leonidas, thy looks and words
 Can check the rapid current of distress,
 How am I mark'd for misery! How long!
 When of life's journey less, than half, is pass'd,
 And I must hear those calming sounds no more,
 Nor see that face, which makes affliction smile.'

'This said, returning grief o'erwhelms her breast.
 Her orphan children, her devoted lord,
 Pale, bleeding, breathless on the field of death,
 Her ever-during solitude of woe,
 All rise in mingled horror to her sight,
 When thus in bitt'rest agony she spake.

'O whither art thou going from my arms!
 Shall I no more behold thee! Oh! no more,
 In conquest clad, o'erspread with glorious dust,
 Wilt thou return to greet thy native soil;
 And find thy dwelling joyful! Ah! too brave,
 Why wouldst thou hurry to the dreary gates
 Of death, uncall'd? Another might have bled,
 Like thee a victim of Alcides' race,
 Less dear to all, and Sparta been secure.
 Now ev'ry eye with mine is drown'd in tears.
 All with these babes lament a father lost.
 Alas! how heavy is our lot of pain!
 Our sighs must last, when every other breast
 Exults in safety, purchased by our loss.
 'Thou didst not heed our anguish—didst not seek

One pause for my instruction how to bear
Thy endless absence, or like thee to die?

Unutterable sorrow here confin'd
Her voice. These words Leonidas return'd.

'I see, I share thy agony. My soul
Ne'er knew, how warm the prevalence of love,
How strong a parent's feelings, till this hour;
Nor was she once insensible to thee
In all her fervour to assert my fame.
How had the honours of my name been stain'd
By hesitation? Shameful life preferr'd
By an inglorious colleague would have left
No choice, but what were infamy to shun,
Not virtue to accept. Then deem no more,
That of thy love regardless, or thy tears,
I rush'd uncall'd, to death. The voice of fate,
The gods, my fame, my country press my doom.
Oh! thou dear mourner! Wherefore swells afresh
That tide of woe? Leonidas must fall.
Alas! far heavier misery impends
O'er thee and these, if, soften'd by thy tears,
I shamefully refuse to yield that breath,
Which justice, glory, liberty and heav'n
Claim for my country, for my sons and thee.
Think on my long unalter'd love. Reflect
On my paternal fondness. Hath my heart
E'er known a pause in love, or pious care?
Now shall that care, that tenderness be shewn
Most warm, most faithful. When thy husband dies
For Lacedæmon's safety, thou wilt share,
Thou and thy children the diffusive good.
I am selected by th' immortal gods
To save a people. Should my timid heart
That sacred charge abandon, I should plunge
Thee too in shame, in sorrow. Thou wouldst mourn
With Lacedæmon; wouldst with her sustain
Thy painful portion of oppression's weight,

Behold thy sons now worthy of their name,
 Their Spartan birth. Their growing bloom would pine
 Depress'd, dishonour'd, and their youthful hearts
 Beat at the sound of liberty no more.
 On their own merit, on their father's fame,
 When he the Spartan freedom hath confirm'd,
 Before the world illustrious will they rise
 Their country's bulwark, and their mother's joy.'

Here paus'd the patriot. In religious awe
 Grief heard the voice of virtue. No complaint
 The solemn silence broke. Tears ceas'd to flow;
 Ceas'd for a moment soon again to stream.
 Behold in arms before the palace drawn,
 His brave companions of the war demand
 Their leader's presence. Then her griefs, renew'd,
 Surpassing utterance intercept her sighs.
 Each accent freezes on her falt'ring tongue.
 In speechless anguish on the hero's breast
 She sinks. On ev'ry side his children press,
 Hang on his knees, and kiss his honour'd hand.
 His soul no longer struggles to confine
 Her agitation. Down the hero's cheek,
 Down flows the manly sorrow. Great in woe
 Amid his children, who enclose him round,
 He stands, indulging tenderness and love
 In graceful tears, when thus with lifted eyes,
 Address'd to heav'n. 'Thou ever-living pow'r,
 Look down propitious, sire of gods and men!
 O to this faithful woman, whose desert
 May claim thy favour, grant the hours of peace!
 And thou, my bright forefather, seed of Jove,
 O Hercules, neglect not these thy race!
 But since that spirit, I from thee derive,
 Transports me from them to resistless fate,
 Be thou their guardian! Teach them like thyself
 By glorious labours to embellish life,
 And from their father let them learn to die.'

Here ending, forth he issues, and assumes
 Before the ranks his station of command.
 They now proceed. So mov'd the host of heav'n
 On Phlegra's plains to meet the giant sons
 Of Earth and Titan. From Olympus march'd
 The deities embattled; while their king
 Tow'r'd in the front with thunder in his grasp.
 Thus through the streets of Lacedæmon pass'd
 Leonidas. Before his footsteps bow
 The multitude exulting. On he treads
 Rever'd. Unsated, their enraptur'd sight
 Pursues his graceful stature, and their tongues
 Extol and hail him, as their guardian god.
 Firm in his nervous hand he gripes the spear.
 Low, as the ankles, from his shoulders hangs
 The massy shield; and o'er his burnish'd helm
 The purple plumage nods. Harmonious youths,
 Around whose brows entwining laurels play,
 In lofty-sounding strains his praise record;
 While snowy-finger'd virgins all the way
 Bestrew with od'rous garlands. Now his breast
 Is all possess'd by glory, which dispell'd
 Whate'er of grief remain'd, or vain regret
 For those he left behind. The rev'rend train
 Of Lacedæmon's senate last appear
 To take their final, solemn leave, and grace
 Their hero's parting steps. Around him flow
 In civil pomp their venerable robes,
 Mix'd with the blaze of arms. The shining troop
 Of warriors press behind him. Maron here
 With Menalippus warm in flow'ry prime,
 There Agis, there Megistias, and the chief,
 Diences. Laconia's dames ascend
 The loftiest mansions; thronging o'er the roofs,
 Applaud their sons, their husbands, as they march:
 So parted Argo from th' Iolchian Strand
 To plough the foaming surge. Thessalia's nymphs,
 Rang'd on the cliffs, o'ershading Neptune's face,
 Still on the distant vessel fix'd their eyes

Admiring, still in pæans bless'd the helm,
 By Greece entrusted with her chosen sons
 For high adventures on the Colchian shore.
 Swift on his course Leonidas proceeds.
 Soon is Eurotas pass'd, and Lerna's bank,
 Where his victorious ancestor subdu'd
 The many-headed Hydra, and the lake
 To endless fame consign'd. Th' unwearied bands
 Next through the pines of Mænalus he led,
 And down Parthenius urg'd the rapid toil.
 Six days incessant was their march pursu'd,
 When to their ear the hoarse-resounding waves
 Beat on the Isthmus. Here the tents are spread.
 Below the wide horizon then the sun
 Haddipp'd his beamy locks. The queen of night
 Glean'd from the center of th' ethereal vault,
 And o'er the raven plumes of darkness shed
 Her placid light. Leonidas detains
 Dieneces and Agis. Open stands
 The tall pavilion, and admits the moon.
 As here they sit conversing, from the hill,
 Which rose before them, one of noble port
 Is seen descending. Lightly down the slope
 He treads. He calls aloud. They heard, they knew
 The voice of Alpheus, whom the king address'd.

'O thou, with swiftness by the gods endu'd
 To match the ardour of thy daring soul,
 What from the Isthmus draws thee? Do the Greeks
 Neglect to arm and face the public foe?'

'Good news gives wings, said Alpheus. Greece is arm'd.
 The neighb'ring Isthmus holds th' Arcadian bands.
 From Mantinea Diophantus leads
 Five hundred spears; nor less from Tegea's walls
 With Hegesander move. A thousand more,
 Who in Orchomenus reside, and range
 Along Parrhasius, or Cyllene's brow;
 Who near the foot of Erymanthus dwell,

Or on Alphean banks, with various chiefs
 Expect thy presence. Most is Clonius fam'd,
 Of stature huge, unshaken rock of war.
 Four hundred warriors brave Alcmaeon draws
 From stately Corinth's tow'rs. Two hundred march
 From Phlius. Them Eupalamus commands.
 An equal number of Mycenæ's race
 Aristobulus heads. Through fear alone
 Of thee, and threat'ning Greece the Thebans arm.
 A few in Thebes authority and rule
 Usurp. Corrupted with Barbarian gold,
 They quench the gen'rous, eleutherian flame
 In ev'ry heart. The eloquent they bride.
 By specious tales the multitude they cheat,
 Establishing base measures on the plea
 Of public safety. Others are immers'd
 In all the sloth of plenty, who, unmov'd
 In shameful ease, behold the state betray'd.
 Aw'd by thy name, four hundred took the field.
 The wily Anaxander is their chief
 With Leontiades. To see their march
 I staid, then hasten'd to survey the streights,
 Which thou shalt render sacred to renown.'

Forever mingled with a crumbling soil,
 Which moulders round th' indented Malian coast,
 The sea rolls slimy. On a solid rock,
 Which forms the inmost limit of a bay,
 Thermopylæ is stretch'd. Where broadest spread'
 It measures threescore paces, bounded here
 By the salt ooze, which underneath presents
 A dreary surface; there the lofty cliffs
 Of woody'd Cæta overlook the pass,
 And far beyond o'er half the surge below
 Their horrid umbrage cast. Across the mouth
 An ancient bulwark of the Phocians stands,
 A wall with gates and tow'rs. The Locrian force
 Was marching forward. Them I pass'd to greet
 Demophilus of Thespia, who had pitch'd

Seven hundred spears before th' important fence.
 His brother's son attends the rev'rend chief,
 Young Dithyrambus. He for noble deeds,
 Yet more for temperance of mind renown'd,
 In early bloom with brightest honors shines,
 Nor wantons in the blaze. Here Agis spake.

'Well hast thou painted that illustrious youth.
 He is my host at Thespia. Though adorn'd
 With various wreaths, by fame, by fortune bless'd,
 His gentle virtues take from Envy's lips
 Their blasting venom; and her baneful eye
 Strives on his worth to smile.' In silence all
 Again remain, when Alpheus thus proceeds.

'Platea's chosen veterans I saw,
 Small in their number, matchless in their fame.
 Diomedon the leader. Keen his sword
 At Marathon was felt, where Asia bled.
 These guard Thermopylae. Among the hills,
 Unknown to strangers winds an upper streight,
 Which by a thousand Phocians is secur'd.

Ere these brave Greeks I quitted, in the bay
 A stately chieftain of th' Athenian fleet
 Arriv'd. I join'd him. Copious in thy praise
 He utter'd rapture, but austere ly blam'd
 Laconia's tardy counsels; while the ships
 Of Athens long had stemm'd Eubœan tides,
 Which flow not distant from our future post.
 This was the far-fam'd Æschylus, by Mars,
 By Phœbus lov'd. Parnassus him proclaims
 The first of Attic poets, him the plains
 Of Marathon a soldier, try'd in arms.'

'Well may Athenians murmur,' said the king.
 'Too long hath Sparta slumber'd on her shield.
 By morn beyond the Isthmus we will spread
 A gen'rous banner. In Laconian strains

OF Alcman and Terpander lives the fame
 Of our forefathers. Let our deeds attract
 The brighter muse of Athens in the song
 Of Æschylus divine. Now frame thy choice.
 Share in our fate; or, hast'ning home, report,
 How much already thy discerning mind,
 Thy active limbs have merited from me,
 How serv'd thy country. From th' impatient lips
 Of Alpheus swift these fervid accents broke.

'I have not measur'd such a tract of land,
 Have not, untir'd, beheld the setting sun,
 Nor through the shade of midnight urg'd my steps
 To animate the Grecians, that myself
 Might be exempt from warlike toil, or death.
 Return! Ah! no. A second time my speed
 Shall visit thee, Thermopylæ. My limbs
 Shall at thy side, Leonidas, obtain
 An honorable grave. And oh! amid
 His country's perils if a Spartan breast
 May feel a private sorrow, fierce revenge
 I seek not only for th' insulted state,
 But for a brother's wrongs. A younger hope,
 Than I, and Maron, bless'd our father's years,
 Child of his age, and Polydorus nam'd.
 His mind, while tender in his op'ning prime,
 Was bent to strenuous virtue. Gen'rous scorn
 Of pain, or danger taught his early strength
 To struggle patient with severest toils.
 Oft, when inclement winter chill'd the air,
 When frozen show'rs had swoln Eurotas' stream,
 Amid th' impetuous channel would he plunge
 To breast the torrent. On a fatal day,
 As in the sea his active limbs he bath'd,
 A savage corsair of the Persian king
 My brother naked and defenceless bore,
 Ev'n in my sight, to Asia; there to waste
 With all the promise of its growing worth
 His youth in bondage. Tedious were the tale,

Should I recount my pains, my father's woes,
 'The days he wept, the sleepless nights he beat
 His aged bosom. And shall Alpheus' spear
 Be absent from Thermopylæ, nor claim,
 O Polydorus, vengeance for thy wrongs
 In that first slaughter of the barb'rous foe.'

Here interpos'd Dienece. Their hands
 He grasp'd, and cordial transport thus express'd.

'O that Lycurgus from the shades might rise
 To praise the virtue, which his laws inspire!'

Thus till the dead of night these heroes pass'd
 The hours in friendly converse, and enjoy'd
 Each other's virtue. Happiest of men!
 At length with gentle heaviness the pow'r
 Of sleep invades their eyelids, and constrains
 Their magnanimity and zeal to rest;
 When, sliding down the hemisphere, the moon
 Immers'd in midnight shade her silver head.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK II.

THE ARGUMENT.

LEONIDAS on his approach to the Isthmus, is met by the leaders of the troops, sent from other Grecian states, and by the deputies, who composed the Isthmian council. He harangues them; then proceeds in conjunction with these forces, towards Thermopylæ. On the first day he is joined by Dithyrambus; on the third he reaches a valley in Locris, where he is entertained by Oileus, the public host, of the Lacedæmonian state; and the next morning is accompanied by him in a car to the temple of Pan: he finds Medon there, the son of Oileus, and commander of two thousand Locrians, already posted at Thermopylæ, and by him is informed that the army of Xerxes is in sight of the pass.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK II.

As **URORA** spreads her purple beams around,
Then move the Spartans. Their approach is known.
The Isthmian council, and the diff'rent chiefs,
Who lead th' auxiliar bands, advance to meet
Leonidas; Eupalamus the strong,
Cnemæon, Clonius, Diophantus brave
With Hegesander. At their head is seen
Procles, whom Mycenæ's ranks
Revere, Mycenæ once august in pow'r,
Splendid wealth, and vaunting still the name
Of Agamemnon. To Laconia's king
The chieftain spake. Leonidas, survey
Mycenæ's race. Should ev'ry other Greek
Aw'd by Xerxes, and his eastern host,
Believe not, we can fear, deriv'd from those,
Who once conducted o'er the foaming surge
The strength of Greece; who desert left the fields
Ravag'd Asia, and her proudest walls
On their foundations levell'd to the ground.'

Leonidas replies not, but his voice
Reaches to all. • Illustrious warriors, hail!
Who thus undaunted signalize your faith,
Your gen'rous ardour in the common cause.
But you, whose counsels prop the Greeian state,
Venerable synod. who consign
Your protecting sword, the gate of Greece,
Hail! Whate'er by valour we obtain,
Your wisdom must preserve. With piercing eyes
Contemplate ev'ry city, and discern
Their various tempers. Some with partial care
Guard their own neglect the public weal.
Unmov'd and cold are others. Terror here,

Corruption there presides. O fire the brave
 To gen'ral efforts in the gen'ral cause.
 Confirm the wav'ring. Animate the cold,
 The timid. Watch the faithless. Some betray
 Themselves and Greece. Their perfidy prevent,
 Or call them back to honor. Let us all
 Be link'd in sacred union, and this land
 May face the world's whole multitude in arms:
 If for the spoil, by Paris borne to Troy,
 A thousand keels the Hellespont o'erspread;
 Shall not again confederated Greece
 Be rous'd to battle, and to freedom give
 What once she gave to fame? Behold, we haste
 To stop th' invading tyrant. Till we fall,
 He shall not pour his myriads on your plains.
 But as the gods conceal, how long our strength
 May stand unvanquish'd, or how soon may yield;
 Waste not a moment, till consenting Greece
 Range all her free-born numbers in the field.'

Leonidas concluded. Awful stepp'd
 Before the sage assembly one supreme
 And old in office, who address'd the king.

' Thy bright example ev'ry heart unites.
 From thee her happiest omens Greece derives
 Of concord, safety, liberty and fame.
 Go then, O first of mortals, go, impress
 Amaze and terror on the barb'rous host;
 The free-born Greeks instructing life to deem
 Less dear, than honor, and their country's cause.'

This heard, Leonidas thy secret soul,
 Exulting, tasted of the sweet reward
 Due to thy name through endless time. Once more
 His eyes he turn'd, and view'd in rapt'rous thought
 His native land, which he alone can save;
 Then summon'd all his majesty, and o'er
 The Isthmus trod. The phalanx move behind

deep arrangement. So th' imperial ship
 With stately bulk along the heaving tide
 In military pomp conducts the pow'r
 Of some proud navy, bounding from the port
 To bear the vengeance of a mighty state
 Against a tyrant's walls. Till sultry noon
 They march; when halting, as they take repast,
 Across the plain before them they descry
 A troop of Thespians. One above the rest
 Preeminence precedes. His glitt'ring shield,
 Whose gold-emblazon'd orb collects the beams,
 Cast by meridian Phœbus from his throne,
 Flames like another sun. A snowy plume,
 With wanton curls disporting in the breeze,
 Floats o'er his dazzling casque. On nearer view
 Beneath the radiant honours of his crest
 A countenance of youth in rosy prime,
 And manly sweetness won the fix'd regard
 Of each beholder. With a modest grace
 He came respectful tow'rd the king, and shew'd,
 That all ideas of his own desert
 Were sunk in veneration. So the god
 Of light salutes his empyreal sire;
 When from his altar in th' embow'ring grove
 Of palmy Delos, or the hallow'd bound
 Of Tenedos, or Claros, where he hears
 In hymns his praises from the sons of men,
 He reascends the high, Olympian seats:
 Such reverential homage on his brow,
 O'ershading, softens his effulgent bloom
 With loveliness and grace. The king receives
 Th' illustrious Thespian thus. ' My willing tongue
 Would style thee Dithyrambus. Thou dost bear
 All in thy aspect to become that name
 Renown'd for worth and valour. O reveal
 Thy birth, thy charge. Whoe'er thou art, my soul
 Desires to know thee, and would call thee friend.'

To him the youth. ' O bulwark of our weal,
 My name is Dithyrambus; which the lips

Of some benevolent, some gen'rous friend—
 To thee have sounded in a partial strain,
 And thou hast heard with favour. In thy sight
 I stand, deputed by the Thespian chief,
 The Theban, Locrian, by the fam'd in war,
 Diomedon, to hasten thy approach.
 Three days will bring the hostile pow'rs in view

He said. The ready standards are uprear'd.
 By zeal enforc'd, till ev'ning shadows fall,
 The march continues, then by day-spring sweeps
 The earliest dews. The van, by Agis led,
 Displays the grisly face of battle rough
 With spears, obliquely trail'd in dreadful length
 Along th' indented way. Beside him march'd
 His gallant, Thespian host. The center boasts
 Leonidas the leader, who retains
 'The good Megistias near him. In the rear
 Dienece commanded, who in charge
 Kept Menalippus, offspring of his friend,
 For these instructions. 'Let thine eye, young man
 Dwell on the order of our varying march;
 As champaign, valley, mountain, or defile
 Require a change. The eastern tyrant thus
 Conducts not his Barbarians like the sands
 In number. Yet the discipline of Greece
 They will encounter feeble as the sands,
 Dash'd on a rock, and scatter'd in their fall.'

To him th' enquiring youth. 'The martial tread
 The flute's slow warble, both in just accord,
 Entrance my senses; but let wonder ask,
 Why is that tender vehicle of sound
 Preferr'd in war by Sparta? Other Greeks
 To more sonorous music rush in fight'.

'Son of my friend,' Dienece rejoins,
 Well dost thou note. I praise thee. Sparta's law
 With human passions, source of human woes,

Maintains perpetual strife. She sternly curbs
 Our infant hearts, till passion yields its seat
 To principal and order. Music too,
 By Spartans lov'd, is temper'd by the law;
 Still to her plan subservient melts in notes,
 Which cool and sooth, not irritate and warm.
 Thus by habitual abstinence, apply'd
 To ev'ry sense, suppressing nature's fire,
 By modes of duty, not by ardour sway'd,
 O'er each impetuous enemy abroad,
 At home o'er vice and pleasure we prevail.

'O might I merit a Laconian name!
 The Arcaman answer'd. 'But explain,
 What is the land, we traverse? What the hill,
 Whose parted summit in a spacious void
 Admits a bed of clouds? And gracious tell,
 Whose are those suits of armour, which I see
 Borne by two Helots.' At the questions pleas'd;
 Dienecees continues. 'Those belong
 To Alpheus and his brother. Light of foot
 They, disencumber'd, all at large precede
 This pond'rous band. They guide a troop of slaves,
 Our missile-weapon'd Helots, to observe,
 Provide, forewarn, and obstacles remove.
 This tract is Phocis. That divided hill
 Is fam'd Parnassus. Thence the voice divine
 Was sent by Phœbus, summoning to death
 The king of Sparta. From his fruitful blood
 A crop will spring of victory to Greece.'

'And these three hundred high in birth and rank,
 All citizens of Sparta' — cries the youth,
 'They all must bleed,' Dienecees subjoins,
 'All with their leader. So the law decrees.'

To him with earnest looks the gen'rous youth.
 Wilt thou not place me in that glorious hour
 Close to thy buckler? Gratitude will brace

Thy pupil's arm to manifest the force
 Of thy instruction.' 'Menalippus, no,'
 Return'd the chief. 'Not thou of Spartan breed,
 Nor call'd to perish. Thou unwedded too
 Wouldst leave no race behind thee. Live to praise,
 Live to enjoy our solitary fall.
 Reply is needless. See, the sun descends.
 The army halts. I trust thee with a charge,
 Son of Megistias. In my name command
 Th' attendant Helots to erect our camp.
 We pitch our tents in Locris.' Quick the youth
 His charge accomplish'd. From a gen'rous meal,
 Where at the call of Alpheus Locris show'r'd
 Her Amalthean plenty on her friends,
 The sated warriors soon in slumber lose
 The memory of toil. His watchful round
 Dieneses with Menalippus takes.

The moon rode high and clear. Her light benign
 To their pleas'd eyes a rural dwelling shew'd,
 All unadorn'd, but seemly. Either side
 Was fenc'd by trees high-shadowing. The front
 Look'd on a crystal pool, by feather'd tribes
 At ev'ry dawn frequented. From the springs
 A small redundance fed a shallow brook,
 O'er smoothest pebbles rippling just to wake,
 Not startle silence, and the ear of night
 Entice to listen undisturb'd. Around,
 The grass was cover'd by reposing sheep,
 Whose drowsy guard no longer bay'd the moon.

The warriors stopp'd, contemplating the seat
 Of rural quiet. Suddenly a swain
 Steps forth. His fingers touch the breathing reed.
 Uprise the fleecy train. Each faithful dog
 Is rous'd. All heedful of the wonted sound
 Their known conductor follow. Slow behind
 Th' observing warriors move. Ere long they reach
 A broad and verdant circle, thick enclos'd

With birches straight and tall, whose glossy rind
 Is clad in silver from Diana's car.
 The ground was holy, and the central spot
 An altar bore to Pan. Beyond the orb
 Of screening trees th' external circuit swarm'd
 With sheep and beeves, each neighb'ring hamlet's wealth
 Collected. Thither soon the swain arriv'd,
 Whom by the name of Melibœus hail'd,
 A peasant throng surrounded. As their chief,
 He nigh the altar to his rural friends
 Address'd these words. 'O sent from diff'rent lords
 With contribution to the public wants,
 Time presses. God of peasants, bless our course!
 Speed to the slow-pac'd ox, for once impart!
 'That o'er these vallies, cool'd by dewy night,
 We to our summons true, ere noon-tide blaze,
 May join Oileus, and his praise obtain.'

He ceas'd. To rustic madrigals and pipes,
 Combin'd with bleating notes, and tinkling bells,
 With clamor shrill from busy tongues of dogs,
 Or hollow-sounding from the deep-mouth'd ox,
 Along the valley, herd and flock are driv'n
 Successive, halting oft to harmless spoil
 Of flow'rs and herbage, springing in their sight.
 While Melibœus marshall'd with address
 The inoffensive host, unseen in shades
 Diences applauded, and the youth
 Of Menalippus caution'd. 'Let no word
 Impede the careful peasant. On his charge
 Depends our welfare. Diligent and staid
 He suits his godlike master. Thou wilt see
 That righteous hero soon. Now sleep demands
 Our debt to nature.' On a carpet dry
 Of moss, beneath a wholesome beech they lay,
 Arm'd, as they were. Their slumber short retires
 With night's last shadow. At their warning rous'd,
 The troops proceed. Th' admiring eye of youth

In Menalippus caught the morning rays
 To guide its travel o'er the landscape wide
 Of cultivated hillocks, dales and lawns,
 Where mansions, hamlets interpos'd ; where domes
 Rose to their gods through consecrated shades.
 He then exclaims. 'O say, can Jove devote
 These fields to ravage, those abodes to flames ?'

The Spartan answers—'Ravage, sword and fire
 Must be endur'd, as incidental ills.
 Suffice it, these invaders soon, or late,
 Will leave this soil more fertile by their blood
 With spoils abundant to rebuild the fanes.
 Precarious benefits are these, thou seest,
 So fram'd by heav'n ; but virtue is a good,
 No foe can spoil, and lasting to the grave.'

Beside the public way an oval fount
 Of marble sparkled with a silver spray
 Of falling rills, collected from above.
 The army halted, and their hollow casques
 Dipp'd in the limpid stream. Behind it rose
 An edifice, compos'd of native roots,
 And oaken trunks of knotted girth unwrought.
 Within were beds of moss. Old, batter'd arms
 Hung from the roof. The curious chiefs approach.
 These words, engraven on a tablet rude,
 Megistias reads ; the rest in silence hear.
 ' Yon marble fountain, by Oileus plac'd,
 To thirsty lips in living waters flows ;
 For weary steps he fram'd this cool retreat ;
 A grateful off'ring here to rural peace,
 His dinted shield, his helmet he resign'd.
 O passenger, if born to noble deeds
 Thou wouldst obtain perpetual grace from Jove,
 Devote thy vigour to heroic toils,
 And thy decline to hospitable cares.
 Rest here ; then seek Oileus in his vale.'

'O Jove, burst forth Leonidas, thy grace
Is large and various. Length of days and bliss
'To him thou giv'st, to me a shorten'd term,
Nor yet less happy. Grateful we confess
'Thy diff'rent bounties, measur'd full to both.
Come let us seek Oileus in his vale.'

The word is giv'n. The heavy phalanx moves.
The light-pac'd Helots long, ere morning dawn'd,
Had recommenc'd their progress. They o'ertook
Blithe Melibœus in a spacious vale,
The fruitfullest in Locris, ere the sun
Shot forth his noon-tide beams. On either side
A surface scarce perceptibly ascends.
Luxuriant vegetation crowds the soil
With trees close-rang'd and mingling. Rich the loads
Of native fruitage to the sight reveal
Their vig'rous nurture. There the flushing peach,
The apple, citron, almond, pear and date,
Pomegranates, purple mulberry, and fig,
From interlacing branches mix their hues
And scents, the passenger's delight; but leave
In the mid-vale a pasture long and large,
Exuberant in vivid verdure cropp'd
By herds, by flocks, innum'rous. Neighb'ring knolls
Are speckled o'er with cots, whose humble roofs
'To herdsmen, shepherds, and laborious kins
Once yielded rest unbroken, till the name
Of Xerxes shook their quiet. Yet this day
Was festive. Swains and damsels, youth and age,
From toil, from home enlarg'd, disporting, fill'd
Th'enliven'd meadow. Under ev'ry shade
A hoary minstrel sat; the maidens danc'd;
Flocks bleated; oxen low'd; the horses neigh'd;
With joy the vale resounded; terror fled;
Leonidas was nigh. The welcome news
By Melibœus, hast'ning to his lord,
Was loudly told. The Helots too appear'd.
While with his brother Alpheus thus discours'd—

'In this fair valley old Oileus dwells
 The first of Locrians, of Laconia's state
 The public host. Yon large pavillions mark.
 They promise welcome. Thither let us bend,
 'There tell our charge.' This said, they both advance.
 A hoary band receives them. One, who seem'd
 In rank, in age superior, wav'd his hand
 To Melibœus, standing near, and spake—

'By this my faithful messenger I learn,
 'That you are friends. Nor yet th' invader's foot
 Hath pass'd our confines. Else, o'ercast by time,
 My sight would scarce distinguish friend, or foe,
 A Grecian, or Barbarian.' Alpheus then—

'We come from Lacedæmon, of our king
 Leonidas forerunners.' 'Is he nigh ?'
 The cordial senior tenderly exclaims.
 'I am Oileus. Him a beardless boy
 I knew in Lacedæmon. Twenty years
 Are since elaps'd. He scarce remembers me:
 But I will feast him, as becomes my zeal.
 Him and his army. You, my friends, repose.'

They sit. He still discourses— 'Spartan guests,
 In me an aged soldier you behold.
 From Ajax, fam'd in Agamemnon's war,
 Oilean Ajax flows my vital stream,
 Unmix'd with his presumption. I have borne
 'The highest functions in the Locrian state,
 Not with dishonor. Self-dismiss'd, my age
 Hath in this valley on my own demesne
 Liv'd tranquil, not recluse. My comrades these,
 Old magistrates and warriors like myself,
 Releas'd from public care, with me retir'd
 To rural quiet. Through our last remains
 Of time in sweet garrulity we slide,
 Recounting pass'd achievements of our prime ;
 Nor wanting lib'ral means for lib'ral deeds,

Here bless'd, here blessing, we reside. These flocks,
 These herds and pastures, these our num'rous hinds,
 And poverty, hence exil'd, may divulge
 Our generous abundance. We can spread
 A banquet for an army. By the state
 Once more entreated, we accept a charge,
 To age well-suited. By our watchful care
 The goddess Plenty in your tents shall dwell.'

He scarce had finish'd, when the ensigns broad
 Of Lacedæmon's phalanx down the vale
 Were seen to wave, unfolding at the sound
 Of flutes, soft-warbling in th' expressive mood
 Of Dorian sweetness, unadorn'd. Around,
 In notes of welcome ev'ry shepherd tun'd
 His sprightly reed. The damsels shew'd their hair,
 Diversify'd with flowrets. Garlands gay,
 Rush-woven baskets, glowing with the dyes
 Of amaranthis, of jasmín, roses, pinks
 And violets they carry, tripping light
 Before the steps of grimly-featur'd Mars
 To blend the smiles of Flora with his frown.
 Leonidas they chaunt in silvan lays,
 Him the defender of the meads and groves,
 Him more, than Pan, a guardian to their flocks.
 While Philomela, in her poplar shade
 Awaken'd, strains her èmulating throat,
 And joins with liquid trills the swelling sounds.

Behold, Oileus and his ancient train
 Accost Laconia's king, whose looks and words
 Confess remembrance of the Locrian chief.

'Thrice hail ! Oileus, Sparta's noble host!
 Thou art of old acquainted with her sons,
 Their laws, their manners. Musical, as brave,
 Train'd to delight in smooth Terpander's lay,
 In Alcman's Dorian measure, we enjoy
 In thy melodious vale th' unlabour'd strains

Of rural pipes, to nightingales attun'd.
 Our heart-felt gladness deems the golden age
 Subsisting, where thou govern'st. Still these tones
 Of joy continu'd may thy dwellings hear!
 Still may this plenty, unmolested, crown
 The favor'd district! May thy rev'rend dust
 Have peaceful shelter in thy father's tomb!
 Kind heav'n, that merit to my sword impart!

'By joy uplifted, forth Oileus broke.
 Thou dost recal me then! O sent to guard
 These fruits from spoil, these hoary locks from shame,
 Permit thy weary'd soldiers to partake
 Of Locrian plenty. Enter thou my tents,
 Thou and thy captains. I salute them all.'

The hero full of dignity and years,
 Once bold in action, but plac'd now in ease,
 Ev'n by his look, benignly cast around,
 Gives lassitude relief. With native grace,
 With heart-effus'd complacency, the king
 Accepts the lib'ral welcome; while his troops,
 To relaxation and repast dismiss'd,
 Pitch on the wounded green their bristling spears.

Still is the evening. Under chesnut shades
 With interweaving poplars spacious stands
 A well-fram'd tent. There calm the heroes sit,
 The genial board enjoy, and feast the mind
 On sage discourse; which thus Oileus clos'd.

'Behold, night lifts her signal to invoke
 That friendly god, who owns the drowsy wand.
 To Mercury this last libation flows.
 Farewel till morn.' They separate, they sleep
 All, but Oileus, who forsakes the tent.
 On Melibœus in these words he calls.
 'Approach my faithful friend.' To him the swain.
 'Thy bondman hears thy call.' The chief replies
 Loud for the gath'ring peasantry to heed.

'Come, Melibœus. it is surely time,
 That my repeated gift, the name of friend
 Thou shouldst accept The name of bondman wounds
 My ear. Be free. No longer, best of men,
 Reject that boon, nor let my feeble head,
 To thee a debtor, as to gracious heav'n,
 Descend and sleep unthankful in the grave.
 Though yielding nature daily feels decay;
 Thou dost prevent all care. The gods estrange
 Pain from my pillow, have secur'd my breast
 From weeds too oft in aged soils profuse,
 From self-tormenting petulance and pride,
 From jealousy and envy at the fame
 Of younger men. Leonidas will dim
 My former lustre, as that silver orb
 Outshines the meanest star; and I rejoice.
 O Melibœus, these elect of Jove
 To certain death advance. Immortal pow'rs!
 How social, how endearing is their speech!
 How flow in lib'ral cheerfulness their hearts!
 To such a period verging, men like these
 Age well may envy, and that envy take
 The genuine shape of virtue. Let their span
 Of earthly beings, while it lasts, contain
 Each earthly joy. Till bless'd Elysium spread
 Her ever blooming, inexhausted stores
 To their glad sight, be mine the grateful task
 To drain my plenty. From the vaulted caves
 Our vessels large of well-fermented wine,
 From all our gran'ries lift the treasur'd corn.
 Go, load the groaning axles. Nor forget
 With garments new to greet Melissa's nymphs.
 To her a triple change of vestments bear
 With twenty lambs, and twenty speckled kids.
 Be it your care, my peasants, some to aid
 Him your director, others to select
 Five hundred oxen, thrice a thousand sheep,
 Of lusty swains a thousand. Let the morn,
 When first she blushes, see my will perform'd.'

They heard. Their lord's injunctions to fulfil
 Was their ambition. He, unresting, mounts
 A ready car. The coursers had enroll'd
 His name in Isthmian and Nemean games.
 By moon-light, floating on the splendid reins,
 He, o'er the busy vale intent, is borne
 From place to place, o'erlooks, directs, forgets
 That he is old. Mean time the shades of night
 Retiring, wake Dieneces. He gives
 The word. His pupil seconds. Ev'ry band
 Is arm'd. Day opens. Sparta's king appears.
 Oileus greets him. In his radiant car
 The senior stays reluctant; but his guest
 So wills, in Spartan reverence to age.
 Then spake the Locrian. 'To assist thy camp
 A chosen band of peasants I detach.
 I trust thy valour. Doubt not thou my care;
 Nor doubt that swain.' Oileus, speaking, look'd
 On Melibœus. Skilful he commands
 These hinds. 'Him wise, him faithful I have prov'd
 More than Eumæus to Laertes' son.
 To him th' Ceteæan woods, their devious tracks
 Are known, each rill and fountain. Near the pass
 Two thousand Locrians wilt thou find encamp'd,
 My eldest born their leader, Medon nam'd,
 Well-exercis'd in arms. My daughter dwells
 On Ceta. Sage Melissa she is call'd,
 Enlighten'd priestess of the tuneful nine.
 She haply may accost thee. Thou wilt lend
 An ear. Not fruitless are Melissa's words.
 Now, servants, bring the sacred wine.' Obey'd,
 He, from his seat uprising, thus proceeds—

'Lo! from this chalice a libation pure
 To Mars, to Grecian liberty and laws,
 To their protector, eleutherian Jove,
 To his nine daughters, who record the brave;
 To thy renown, Leonidas, I pour;
 And take an old man's benediction too.'

He stopp'd. Affection, struggling in his heart,
 Burst forth again. 'Illustrious guest, afford
 Another hour. That slender space of time
 Yield to my sole possession. While the troops,
 Already glitt'ring down the dewy vale,
 File through its narrow'd outlet; near my side
 Deign to be carry'd, and my talk endure.'

The king, well-pleas'd, ascends. Slow move the steeds
 Behind the rear. Oileus grasps his hand,
 Then in the fulness of his soul pursues.

'Thy veneration for Laconia's laws
 That I may strengthen, may to rapture warm,
 Hear me display the melancholy fruits
 Of lawless will. When o'er the Lydian plains
 Th' innumerable tents of Xerxes spread,
 His vassal, Pythius, who in affluent means
 Surpasses me, as that Barbarian prince
 Thou dost in virtue, entertain'd the host,
 And proffer'd all his treasures. These the king
 Refusing, ev'n augmented from his own.
 An act of fancy, not habitual grace.
 A sparkling vapour through the regal gloom
 Of cruelty and pride. He now prepar'd
 To march from Sardis, when with humble tears
 The good old man besought him. Let the king
 Propitious hear a parent. In thy train
 I have five sons. Ah! leave my eldest born,
 Thy future vassal, to sustain my age!'
 The tyrant fell reply'd. 'Presumptuous man,
 Who art my slave, in this tremendous war,
 Is not my person hazarded, my race,
 My consort? Former merit saves from death
 Four of thy offspring. Him, so dearly priz'd
 Thy folly hath destroy'd. His body straight
 Was hewn asunder. By the public way
 On either side a bleeding half was cast,
 And millions pass'd between. O Spartan king,

Taught to revere the sanctity of laws,
 The acts of Xerxes with thy own compare,
 His fame with thine. The curses of mankind
 Give him renown. He marches to destroy,
 But thou to save. Behold the trees are bent,
 Each eminence is loaded thick with crouds,
 From cots, from ev'ry hamlet pour'd abroad,
 To bless thy steps, to celebrate thy praise.'

Oftimes the king his decent brow inclin'd,
 Mute and obsequious to an elder's voice,
 Which through th' instructed ear, unceasing flow'd
 In eloquence and knowledge. Scarcely an hour
 Was fled. The narrow dale was left behind.
 A causeway broad disclos'd an ancient pile
 Of military fame. A trophy large,
 Compact with crested morions, targets rude,
 With spears and corselets. dimm'd by eating age,
 Stood near a lake pellucid, smooth, profound,
 Of circular expanse; whose bosom shew'd
 A green-slop'd island, figur'd o'er with flow'rs;
 And from its center lifting high to view
 A marble chapel, on the massy strength
 Of Doric columns rais'd. A full-wrought freeze
 Display'd the sculptor's art. In solemn pomp
 Of obelisks and busts, and story'd urns,
 Sepulchral mansions of illustrious dead
 Were scatter'd round, o'ercast with shadows black
 Of yew and cypress. In a serious note
 Oileus, pointing, opens new discourse.

'Beneath yon turf my ancestors repose.
 Oilean Ajax singly was depriv'd
 Of fun'ral honors there. With impious lust
 He stain'd Minerva's temple. From the gulph
 Of briny waters by their god preserv'd,
 That god he brav'd. He lies beneath a rock,
 By Neptune's trident in his wrath o'erturn'd.
 Shut from Elysium for a hundred years,
 The hero's ghost bewail'd his oozy tomb.

A race more pious on th' Oilean house
 Felicity have drawn. To ev'ry god
 I owe my bliss, my early fame to Pan.
 Once on the margin of that silent pool
 In their nocturnal camp Barbarians lay,
 Awaiting morn to violate the dead,
 My youth was fir'd. I summon'd from their eots
 A rustic host. We sacrific'd to Pan,
 Assail'd th' unguarded ruffians in his name.
 He with his terrors smote their yielding hearts.
 Not one surviv'd the fury of our swains.
 Rich was the pillage. Hence that trophy rose;
 Of costly blocks constructed, hence that fane,
 Inscrib'd to Pan th' armipotent. O king,
 Be to an old man's vanity benign.
 This frowning emblem of terrific war
 Proclaims the ardour and exploits of youth.
 This to barbarian strangers, ent'ring Greece,
 Shews, what I was. The marble fount, thou saw'st,
 Of living water, whose transparent flow
 Reliev'd thy march in yester sultry sun,
 The cell, which offer'd rest on beds of moss,
 Shew, what I am; to Grecian neighbours shew
 The hospitality of age. O age,
 Where are thy graces, but in lib'ral deeds,
 In bland deportment? Would thy furrow'd cheeks
 Lose the deformity of time? Let smiles
 Dwell in thy wrinkles. Then, rever'd by youth,
 Thy feeble steps will find' Abruptly here
 He paus'd. A manly warrior full in sight
 Beside the trophy on his target lean'd,
 Unknown to Sparta's leader, who address'd
 His rev'rend host. 'Thou pausest. Let me ask,
 Whom do I see, resembling in his form
 A demigod?' In transport then the sage.

'It is my son, discover'd by his shield,
 Thy brave auxiliar, Medon. He sustains
 My ancient honors in his native state,

Which kindly chose my offspring to replace
 Their long-sequester'd chief. Heart-winning guest!
 My life, a tide of joy, which never knew
 A painful ebb, beyond its wonted mark
 Flows in thy converse. Could a wish prevail,
 My long and happy course should finish here.'

The chariot rested. Medon now approach'd,
 Saluting thus Leonidas. 'O king
 Of warlike Sparta, Xerxes' host in sight
 Begin to spread their multitude, and fill
 The spacious Malian plain.' The king replies--

'Accept, illustrious messenger, my thanks.
 With such a brave assistant, as the son
 Of great Oileus, more assur'd I go
 To face those numbers.' With his god-like friend
 The father, now dismounting from his car,
 Embraces Medon. In a sliding bark
 They all are wafted to the island fane,
 Erected by Oileus, and enrich'd
 With his engrav'd achievements. Thence the eye
 Of Sparta's gen'ral in extensive scope
 Contemplates each battalion, as they wind
 Along the pool; whose limpid face reflects
 Their weapons, glist'ning in the early sun.
 Them he to Pan armipotent commends,
 His favor thus invoking. 'God, whose pow'r
 By rumour vain, or Echo's empty voice
 Can sink the valiant in desponding fear,
 Can disarray whole armies, smile on these,
 Thy worshippers. Thy own Arcadian's guard.
 Through thee Oileus triumph'd. On his son,
 On me look down. Our shields auxiliar join
 Against profane Barbarians, who insult
 The Grecian gods, and meditate the fall
 Of this thy shrine.' He said, and now intent
 To leave the island, on Oileus call'd.

'He,' Medon answer'd, 'by his joy and zeal
 Too high transported, and discoursing long,
 Felt on his drowsy lids a balmy down
 Of heaviness descending. He, unmark'd
 Amid thy pious commerce with the god,
 Was silently remov'd. The good old chief
 On carpets, rais'd by tender, menial hands,
 Calm in the secret sanctuary is laid.

His hast'ning step Leonidas restrains,
 Thus fervent prays. 'O Maia's son, best pleased,
 When calling slumber to a virtuous eye,
 Watch o'er my venerable friend. Thy balm
 He wants, exhausted by his love to me.
 Sweet sleep, thou soft'nest that intruding pang,
 Which gen'rous breasts, so parting, must admit?

He said, embark'd, relanded. To his side
 Inviting Medon, he rejoin'd the host.



LEONIDAS.

BOOK III.

THE ARGUMENT.

Leonidas arrives at Thermopylæ about noon, on the fourth day after his departure from the Isthmus. He is received by Demophilus, the commander of Thespia, and by Anaxander the Theban, treacherously recommending Epialtes, a Malian, who seeks by a pompous description of the Persian power, to intimidate the Grecian leaders, as they are viewing the enemy's camp from the top of mount Oeta. He is answered by Dienece and Diomedon. Xerxes sends Tigranes and Phraortes to the Grecian camp, who are dismissed by Leonidas, and conducted back by Dithyrambus and Diomedon ; which last, incensed at the arrogance of Tigranes, treats him with contempt and menaces. This occasions a challenge to single combat between Diomedon and Tigranes, Dithyrambus and Phraortes. Epialtes after a conference with Anaxander, declares his intention of returning to Xerxes. Leonidas dispatches Agis with Melibœus, a faithful slave of Oileus, and high in the estimation of his lord, to view a body of Phocians, who had been posted at a distance from Thermopylæ for the defence of another pass in mount Oeta.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK III.

NOW in the van Leonidas appears,
With Medon still conferring. 'Hast thou heard,'
He said, 'among th' innumerable foes
What chiefs are most distinguish'd?' 'Might we trust
To fame, reply'd the Locrian, Xerxes boasts
The ablest, bravest, counsellor and chief,
Artemisia, Caria's matchless queen.
To old Darius benefits had bound
Her lord, herself to Xerxes. Not compell'd,
Except by magnanimity, she leads
The best appointed squadron of his fleet.
To female softness Artemisia knows,
But in maternal love. Her widow'd hand
With equity and firmness for her son
Administers the sway. Of Doric race
Still she retains the spirit, which from Greece
Her ancestors transplanted. Other chiefs
Are all Barbarians, little known to fame,
Save one, whom Sparta hath herself supply'd,
Not less, than Demaratus, once her king,
In exile now.' Leonidas rejoins.

'Son of Oileus, like thy father wise,
Like him partake my confidence. Thy words
Recall an æra, sad'ning all my thoughts.
That injur'd Spartan shar'd the regal sway
With one—Alas! my brother, eldest born,
Unbless'd by nature, favor'd by no god,
Cleomenes. Insanity of mind,
Malignant passions, impious acts deform'd
His life, concluded by his own fell hand.
Against his colleague envious he suborn'd

Leutychides. Him perjury and fraud
Plac'd on the seat, by Demaratus held
Unstain'd in lustre.' Here Oileus' son—

' My future service only can repay
Thy confidential friendship. Let us close
The gloomy theme. Thermopylæ is nigh.'
Each face in transport glows. Now Æta rear'd
His tow'ring forehead. With impatient steps
On rush'd the phalanx, sounding pæans high;
As if the present deity of fame
Had from the summit shewn her dazzling form,
With wreaths unfading on her temples bound,
Her adamantine trumpet in her hand
'To celebrate the valour. From the van
Leonidas advances like the sun,
When through dividing clouds his presence stays
Their sweeping rack, and stills the clam'rous wind.
The army silent halt. Their ensigns fan
The air no longer. Motionless their spears.
His eye reveals the ardour of his soul,
Which thus finds utterance from his eager lips—

' All hail! Thermopylæ, and you, the pow'rs,
Presiding here. All hail! ye silvan gods,
Ye fountain nymphs, who send your lucid rills
In broken murmurs down the rugged steep.
Receive us, O benignant, and support
The cause of Greece. Conceal the secret paths,
Which o'er these crags, and through these forests wide
Untrod by human feet, and trac'd alone
By your immortal footsteps. O defend
Your own recesses, nor let impious war
Profane the solemn silence of your groves.
Then on your hills your praises shall you hear
From those, whose deeds shall tell th' approving world
That not to undeservers did ye grant
Your high protection. You my valiant friends,
Now rouse the gen'rous spirit, which inflames

our hearts; exert the vigour of your arms;
 That in the bosoms of the brave and free
 Your memorable actions may survive;
 May sound delightful in the ear of time,
 As blue Neptune beats the Malian strand,
 Or those tall cliffs erect their shaggy tops
 Near to heav'n, your monuments of fame!

As in some torrid region, where the head
 Of Ceres bends beneath her golden load;
 From a burning brand a scatter'd spark
 Invade the parching ground; a sudden blaze
 Weeps o'er the crackling champaign: through his host
 Not with less swiftness to the furthest ranks
 The words of great Leonidas diffus'd
 More than mortal fervour. Ev'ry heart
 Distends with thoughts of glory, such as raise
 The patriot's virtue, and the soldier's fire;
 When danger most tremendous in his form
 Seems in their sight most lovely. On their minds
 Imagination pictures all the scenes
 Of war, the purple field, the heaps of dead,
 The glitt'ring trophy, pil'd with Persian arms.

But lo! the Grecian leaders, who before
 Were station'd near Thermopylæ, salute
 Laconia's king. The Thespian chief, ally'd
 To Dithyrambus, first the silence breaks,
 An ancient warrior. From behind his casque,
 Whose crested weight his aged temples bore,
 The slender hairs, all-silver'd o'er by time,
 Flow'd venerably down. He thus began—

' Joy now shall crown the period of my days;
 And whether nigh my father's urn I sleep;
 Or slain by Persia's sword, embrace the earth,
 Our common parent; be it, as the gods
 Shall best determine. For the present hour
 I bless their bounty, which hath giv'n my age

To see the brave Leonidas, and bid
That hero welcome on this glorious shore
To fix the basis of the Grecian weal.'—

Here too the crafty Anaxander spake—
'Of all the Thebans we, rejoicing, hail
The king of Sparta. We obey'd his call.
O may oblivion o'er the shame of Thebes
A dark'ning veil extend! or those alone
By fame be curs'd, whose impious counsels turn
Their countrymen from virtue! Thebes was sunk,
Her glory bury'd in dishonest sloth.
To wake her langour gen'rous Alpheus came,
The messenger of freedom. O accept
Our grateful hearts, thou Alpheus, art the cause,
That Anaxander from his native gates
Not single joins this host, nor tamely these,
My chosen friends, behind their walls remain.
Enough of words. Time presses. Mount, ye chiefs,
This loftiest part of Œta. This o'erlooks
The streights, and far beyond their northern mouth
Extends our sight across the Malian plain.
Behold the native, Epialtes call'd,
Who with a foe from Thracia's bounds hath march'd!

Disguis'd in seeming worth, he ended here.
The camp not long had Epialtes reach'd,
By race a Malian. Eloquent his tongue,
His heart was false and abject. He was skill'd
To grace perfidious counsels, and to clothe
In swelling phrase the baseness of his soul,
Foul nurse of treasons. To the tents of Greece
Himself a Greek, a faithless spy he came.
Soon to the friends of Xerxes he repair'd,
The Theban chiefs, and nightly councils held
How to betray the Spartans, or deject
By consternation. Up the arduous slope
With him each leader to the summit climbs.
Thence a tremendous prospect they command,

There endless plains, by white pavilions hid,
 spread like the vast Atlantic, when on shore,
 no rock, no promontary stops the sight
 unbounded as it wanders; while the moon,
 the splendid eye of night, in fullest orb
 surveys th' interminate expanse, and throws
 her rays abroad to deck in snowy light
 the dancing billows. Such was Xerxes' camp;
 her pow'r unrivall'd by the mightiest king
 the fiercest conqu'ror, whose blood-thirsty pride,
 dissolving all the sacred ties, which bind
 the happiness of nations, hath upheav'd
 the sleeping fury, Discord, from her den.
 Not from the hundred brazen gates of Thebes,
 the tow'rs of Memphis, and those pregnant fields,
 enrich'd by kindly Nile, such armies swam'd
 round Sesostri's; who with trophies fill'd
 the vanquish'd east, who o'er the rapid foam
 of distant Tanais, o'er the surface broad
 of Ganges sent his formidable name.
 Nor yet in Asia's far extended bounds
 had met such numbers, not when Ninus led
 th' Assyrian race to conquest. Not the gates
 of Babylon along Euphrates pour'd
 such myriads arm'd; when emptying all her streets,
 the rage of dire Semiramis they bore
 beyond the Indus; there defeated, left
 the blood-stain'd current turbid with their dead.

Yet of the chiefs, contemplating this scene,
 not one is shaken. Undismay'd they stand;
 th' immeasurable camp with fearless eyes
 they traverse: while in meditation near
 the treach'rous Malian waits, collecting all
 his pomp of words to paint the hostile pow'r;
 nor yet with falsehood arms his fraudulent tongue
 to feign a tale of terror. Truth herself
 beyond the reach of fiction to enhance
 now aids his treason, and with cold dismay

Might pierce the boldest heart, unless secur'd
 By dauntless virtue, which disdains to live
 From liberty divorc'd. Requested soon,
 He breaks his artful silence. 'Greeks and friends;
 Can I behold my native Malian fields,
 Presenting hostile millions to your sight,
 And not in grief suppress the horr'd tale,
 Which you exact from these ill-omen'd lips.
 On Thracia's sea-beat verge I watch'd the foes;
 Where, joining Europe to the Asian strand,
 A mighty bridge restrain'd th' outrageous waves,
 And stemm'd th' impetuous current: while in arms
 The universal progeny of men
 Seem'd trampling o'er the subjugated flood
 By thousands, by ten thousands. Persians, Medes,
 Assyrians, 'Saces, Indians, swarthy files
 From Æthiopia, Ægypt's tawny sons,
 Arabians, Bactrians, Parthians, all the strength
 Of Asia, and of Libya. Neptune groan'd
 Beneath their number, and indignant heav'd
 His neck against th' incumbent weight. In vain
 The violence of Eurus and the North,
 With rage combin'd, against th' unyielding pile
 Dash'd half the Hellespont. The eastern world
 Sev'n days and nights uninterrupted pass
 To cover Thracia's regions. They accept
 A Persian lord. They range their hardy race
 Beneath his standards. Macedonia's youth,
 The brave Thessalian horse with ev'ry Greek,
 Who dwells beyond Thermopylæ, attend,
 Assist a foreign tyrant. Sire of Gods,
 Who in a moment by thy will supreme
 Canst quell the mighty in their proudest hopes,
 Canst raise the weak to safety, Oh! impart
 Thy instant succour! Interpose thy arm
 With lightning blast their standards! Oh! confound
 With tripple-bolted thunder Asia's tent,
 Whence rushing millions by the morn will pour
 An inundation to o'erwhelm the Greeks.

Resistance else were vain against a host,
Which overspreads Thessalia. Far beyond
That Malian champaign, stretching wide below,
Beyond the utmost measure of the sight
From this aspiring cliff, the hostile camp
Contains yet mightier numbers; who have drain'd
The beds of copious rivers with their thirst,
Who with their arrows hide the mid-day sun.'

'Then we shall give them battle in the shade,
Dieneces reply'd. Not calmly thus
Diomedon. On Persia's camp he bent
His low'ring brow, which frowns had furrow'd o'er,
Then fierce exclaim'd. Bellona, turn and view
With joyful eyes that field, the fatal stage,
By regal madness for thy rage prepar'd
To exercise its horrors. Whet thy teeth,
Voracious death. All Asia is thy prey.
Contagion, famine, and the Grecian sword
For thy insatiate hunger will provide
Variety of carnage.' He concludes;
While on the host immense his cloudy brow
Is fix'd disdainful, and their strength defies.

Mean time an eastern herald down the pass
Was seen, slow-moving tow'ards the Phocian wall.
From Asia's monarch delegated, came
Tigranes and Phraortes. From the hill
Leonidas conducts th' impatient chiefs.
By them environ'd in his tent he sits;
Where thus Tigranes their attention calls.

'Ambassadors from Persia's king we stand
Before you, Grecians. To display the pow'r
Of our great master were a needless task.
The name of Xerxes, Asia's mighty lord,
Invincible, exalted on a throne,
Surpassing human lustre, must have reach'd
To ev'ry clime and ev'ry heart impress'd
With awe, and low submission. Yet I swear

By yon refulgent, orb which flames above,
 The glorious symbol of eternal pow'r,
 This military throng, this shew of war
 Well nigh persuade me, you have never heard
 That name, at whose commanding sound the banks
 Of Indus tremble, and the Caspian wave,
 Th' Ægyptian flood, the Hellespontic surge
 Obedient roll. O impotent and rash!
 Whom yet the large beneficence of heav'n,
 And heav'nly Xerxes, merciful and kind,
 Deign to preserve. Resign your arms. Disperse
 All to your cities. There let humblest hands
 With earth and water greet your destin'd lord.'

As through th' extensive grove, whose leafy boughs
 Entwining, crown some eminence with shade,
 The tempests rush sonorous, and between
 The crashing branches roar; by fierce disdain,
 By indignation thus the Grecians rous'd,
 In loudest clamour close the Persian's speech:
 But ev'ry tongue was hush'd, when Sparta's king
 This brief reply deliver'd from his seat.

'O Persian, when to Xerxes thou return'st,
 Say, thou hast told the wonders of his pow'r.
 Then say, thou saw'st a slender band of Greece,
 Which dares his boasted millions to the field.'

He adds no more. Th' ambassadors retire.
 Them o'er the limits of the Grecian lines
 Diomedon and Thespia's youth conduct.
 In slow solemnity they all proceed,
 And sullen silence; but their looks denote
 Far more, than speech could utter. Wrath contracts
 The forehead of Diomedon. His teeth
 Gnash with impatience of delay'd revenge.
 Disdain, which sprung from conscious merit, flush'd
 The cheek of Dithyrambus. On the face
 Of either Persian arrogance, incens'd

By disappointment, lour'd. The utmost strait
 They now attain'd, which open'd on the tents
 Of Asia, there discov'ring wide to view
 Her deep, immense arrangement. Then the heart
 Of vain Tigranes, swelling at the sight,
 Thus overflows in loud and haughty phrase.

'O Arimanius, origin of ill,
 Have we demanded of thy ruthless pow'r
 Thus with the curse of madness to afflict
 These wretched men? But since thy dreadful ire
 To irresistible perdition dooms
 The Grecian race, we vainly should oppose.
 Be thy dire will accomplish'd. Let them fall,
 Their native soil be fatten'd with their blood.'

Enrag'd, the stern Diomedon replies.
 'Thou base dependant on a lawless king,
 Thou purple slave, thou boaster, dost thou know,
 That I beheld the Marathonian field?
 Where like the Libyan sands before the wind
 Your host was scatter'd by Athenian spears;
 Where thou perhaps by ignominious flight
 Didst from this arm protect thy shiv'ring limbs.
 O let me find thee in to-morrow's fight!
 Along this rocky pavement shalt thou lie
 To dogs a banquet.' With uplifted palms
 Tygranes then. 'Omnipotent support
 Of scepter'd Xerxes, Horomazes, hear!
 To thee his first victorious fruits of war
 Thy worshipper devotes, the gory spoils,
 Which from this Grecian by the rising dawn
 In sight of either host my strength shall rend.'

At length Phraortes, interposing, spake.
 'I too would find among the Grecian chiefs
 One, who in battle dares abide my lance.'

'The gallant youth of Thespia swift reply'd,
 Thou look'st on me, O Persian. Worthier far

Thou might'st have singled from the ranks of Greece,
 Not one more willing to essay thy force.
 Yes, I will prove before the eye of Mars,
 How far the prowess of her meanest chief
 Beyond thy vaunts deserves the palm of fame.'

This said, the Persians to their king repair,
 Back to their camp the Grecians. There they find
 Each soldier, poising his extended spear,
 His weighty buckler bracing on his arm
 In warlike preparation. Through the files
 Each leader, moving vigilant, by praise.
 By exhortation aids their native warmth.
 Alone the Theban Anaxander pin'd,
 Who thus apart his Malian friend bespake.

'What has thy lofty eloquence avail'd,
 Alas! in vain attempting to confound
 The Spartan valour? With redoubled fires,
 See, how their bosoms glow. They wish to die
 They wait impatient for th' unequal fight.
 Too soon th' insuperable foes will spread
 Promiscuous havoc round, and Thebans share
 The doom of Spartans. Through the guarded pass
 Who will adventure Asia's camp to reach
 In our behalf? That Xerxes may be warn'd
 To spare his friends amid the gen'ral wreck;
 When his high-sworn resentment like a flood,
 Increas'd by stormy show'rs, shall cover Greece
 With desolation.' Epialtes here.

'Whence, Anaxander, this unjust despair?
 Is there a path on Ceta's hills unknown
 To Epialtes? Over trackless rocks,
 Through mazy woods my secret steps can pass.
 Farewel. I go. Thy merit shall be told
 To Persia's king. Thou only watch the hour;
 When wanted most, thy ready succour lend.'

Mean time a wary, comprehensive care
 To ev'ry part Leonidas extends;

As in the human frame through ev'ry vein
 And artery minute, the ruling heart
 Its vital pow'rs disperses. In his tent
 The prudent chief of Loeris; he consults,
 He summons Melibœus by the voice
 Of Agis. In humility not mean,
 By no unseemly ignorance depress'd,
 Th' ingenuous swain, by all th' illustrious house
 Of Ajax honor'd, bows before the king,
 Who gracious spake—'The confidence bestow'd,
 The praise by sage Oileus might suffice
 To verify thy worth. Myself have watch'd,
 Have found thee skilful, active and discreet.
 Thou know'st the region round. With Agis go,
 The upper streights, the Phocian camp explore.'

'O condescension, Melibœus then,
 More ornamental to the great, than gems,
 A purple robe, or diadem! The king
 Accepts my service. Pleasing is my task.
 Spare not thy servant. Exercise my zeal.
 Oileus will rejoice, and, smiling, say,
 An humble hand may smooth a hero's path.'

He leads the way, while Agis, following, spake.
 'O swain, distinguish'd by a lib'ral mind,
 Who were thy parents? Where thy place of birth?'
 What chance depriv'd thee of a father's house?
 Oileus sure thy liberty would grant,
 Or Sparta's king solicit for that grace;
 When in a station equal to thy worth
 'Thou mayst be rank'd.'—The prudent hind began.

'In diff'rent stations diff'rent virtues dwell,
 All reaping diff'rent benefits. The great
 In dignity and honors meet reward
 For acts of bounty, and heroic toils:
 A servant's merit is obedience, truth,
 Fidelity; his recompense content.

Be not offended at my words, O chief.
 They, who are free, with envy may behold
 This bondman of Oileus. To his trust,
 His love exalted, I by nature's pow'r
 From his pure model could not fail to mold
 What, thou entitlest lib'ral, Whence I came,
 Or who my parents, is to me unknown.
 In childhood seiz'd by robbers, I was sold.
 They took their price. They hush'd th' atrocious deed.
 Dear to Oileus and his race I throve;
 And whether noble, or ignoble born,
 I am contented, studious of their love
 Alone. Ye sons of Sparta, I admire
 Your acts, your spirit, but confine my own
 To their condition, happy in my lord,
 Himself of men most happy.' Agis bland
 Rejoins. 'O born with talents to become
 A lot more noble, which, by thee refus'd,
 Thou dost the more deserve! Laconia's king
 Discerns thy merit through its modest veil.
 Consummate prudence in thy words I hear.
 Long may contentment, justly priz'd, be thine.
 But should the state demand thee, I foresee,
 Thou wouldst like others in the field excel,
 Wouldst share in glory.' Blithe return'd the swain.

'Not ev'ry service is confin'd to arms.
 Thou shalt behold me in my present state
 Not useless. If the charge, Oileus gave,
 I can accomplish, meriting his praise,
 And thy esteem, my glory will be full.'

Both pleas'd, in converse thus pursue their way,
 Where Æta lifts her summits huge to heav'n
 In rocks abrupt, pyramidal, or tower'd
 Like castles. Sudden from a tufted crag,
 Where goats are browsing, Melilœus hears
 A call of welcome. There his course he stays.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK IV.

THE ARGUMENT.

Tigranes and Phraortes repair to Xerxes, whom they find seated on a throne, surrounded by his Satraps, in a magnificent pavilion; while the Magi stand before him, and sing a hymn, containing the religion of Zoroastres. Xerxes, notwithstanding the arguments of his brothers, Hyperanthes and Abrocomes, gives no credit to the ambassadors, who report, that the Grecians are determined to maintain the pass against him; but by the advice of Artemisia, the queen of Caria, ascends his chariot to take a view of the Grecians himself, and commands Demaratus, an exiled king of Sparta, to attend him. He passes through the midst of his army, consisting of many nations, differing in arms, customs and manners. He advances to the entrance of the straits, and, surprised at the behaviour of the Spartans, demands the reason of it from Demaratus; which occasions a conversation between them on the mercenary forces of Persia, and the militia of Greece. Demaratus, weeping at the sight of his countrymen, is comforted by Hyperanthes. Xerxes, still incredulous, commands Tigranes and Phraortes to bring the Grecians bound before him next day; and retires to his pavilion. Artemisia remains behind with her son, and communicates to Hyperanthes her apprehensions of a defeat at Thermopylæ. She takes an accurate view of the pass, chuses a convenient place for an ambuscade, and on her departure to the Persian camp is surprised by a reproof from a woman of an awful appearance on a cliff of mount Oeta.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK IV.

THE plain beyond Thermopylæ is girt
Half round by mountains, half by Neptune lav'd.
The arduous ridge is broken deep in clefts,
Which open channels to pellucid streams
In rapid flow sonorous. Chief in fame
Spercheos, boasting once his poplars tall,
Foams down a stony bed. Throughout the face
Of this broad champaign numberless are pitch'd
Barbarian tents. Along the winding flood
To rich Thessalia's confines they extend.
They fill the vallies, late profusely bless'd
In nature's vary'd beauties. Hostile spears
Now bristle horrid through her languid shrubs:
Pale die her flowrets under barb'rous feet.
Embracing ivy from its rock is torn.
The lawn, dismantled of its verdure, fades.
The poplar groves, uprooted from the banks,
Leave desolate the stream. Elaborate domes,
To heaven devoted in recesses green,
Had felt rude force, insensible and blind
To elegance and art. The statues, busts,
The figur'd vases mutilated, lie
With chisel'd columns, their engraven freeze,
Their architrave and cornice, all disjoin'd.

Yet unpolluted, is a part reserv'd
In this deep vale, a patrimonial spot
Of Alcadian princes, who, allies
To Xerxes, reign'd in Thessaly. There glow
Inviolatè the shrubs. There branch the trees
Sons of the forest. Over downy moss
Smooth walks and fragrant, lucid here and broad

There clos'd in myrtle under woodbine roofs,
 Wind to retreats delectable, to grotts,
 To silvan structures, bow'rs, and cooling dells,
 Enliven'd all and musical with birds
 Of vocal sweetness, in reluctant plumes
 Innumerable various. Lulling falls
 Of liquid crystal from perennial founts
 Attune their pebbled channels. Here the queen,
 The noble dames of Persia, here the train
 Of royal infants, each with eunuch guards,
 In rich pavilions, dazzling to the sight,
 Possess'd, remote from onset and surprise,
 A tranquil station. Ariana here,
 Ill-destin'd princess, from Darius sprung,
 Hangs, undelighted, o'er melodious rills
 Her drooping forehead. Love-afflicted fair!
 All inharmonious are the feather'd choirs
 To her sad ear. From flow'rs, and florid plants
 To her the breezes, wafting fresh perfumes,
 Transmit no pleasure. Sedulous in vain,
 Her tender slaves in harmony with lutes
 Of soothing sound their warbled voices blend
 To charm her sadness. This, the precious part
 Of Asia's camp, Artuchus holds in charge,
 A satrap, long experienc'd, who presides
 O'er all the regal palaces. High rank'd,
 Bold, resolute and faithful, he commands
 The whole Sperchean vale. In prospect rise
 The distant navy, dancing on the foam,
 Th' unbounded camp, enveloping the plain,
 With Xerxes' tent, august in structure plac'd
 A central object to attract the eyes
 Of subject millions. Thither now resort
 Tigranes and Phraortes. Him they find
 Inclos'd by princes, by illustrious chiefs,
 The potentates of Asia. Near his side
 Abrocromes and Hyperanthes wait,
 His gallant brothers, with Mavæus brave,
 Pandates, Intaphernes, mighty lords.

Their sceptre'd master from his radiant seat
 Looks down imperious. So the stately tow'r
 Of Belus, mingling its majestic brow
 With heav'n's bright azure, from on high survey'd
 The huge extent of Babylon, with all
 Her sumptuous domes and palaces beneath.
 This day his banners to unfurl in Greece
 The monarch's will decides ; but first ordains,
 That grateful hymns should celebrate the name
 Of Horomazes ; So the Persians call'd
 The world's great author. Rob'd in purest white,
 The Magi rang'd before th' unfolded tent.
 Fire blaz'd beside them. Towr'ds the sacred flame
 They turn'd, and sent their tuneful praise to heav'n.

From Zoroastres was the song deriv'd,
 Who on the hills of Persia from his cave,
 By flow'rs environ'd, and melodious founts,
 Which sooth'd the solemn mansion, had reveal'd,
 How Horomazes, radiant source of good,
 Original, immortal fram'd the globe
 In fruitfulness and beauty; how with stars
 By him the heav'ns were spangles; how the sun,
 Refulgent Mithra, purest spring of light,
 And genial warmth, whence teeming nature smiles,
 Burst from the east at his creating voice;
 When straight beyond the golden verge of day
 Night shew'd the horrors of her distant reign,
 Where black and hateful Arimanius frown'd
 The author foul of evil: how with shades
 From his dire mansion he deform'd the works
 Of Horomazes, turn'd to noxious heat
 The solar beam, that foodful earth might parch,
 That streams, exhaling, might forsake their beds,
 Whence pestilence and famine: how the pow'r
 Of Horomazes in the human breast
 Benevolence and equity infus'd,
 Truth, temperance, and wisdom sprung from heav' :
 When Arimanius blacken'd all the soul

With falshood and injustice, with desires
 Insatiable, with violence and rage,
 Malignity and folly. If the hand
 Of Horomazes on precarious life
 Sheds wealth and pleasure; swift th' infernal god
 With wild excess, or av'rice blasts the joy.
 Thou Horomazes, victory dost give.
 By thee with fame the regal head is crown'd.
 Great Xerxes owns thy succour. When in storms
 The hate of direful Arimanius swell'd
 The Hellespont; thou o'er its chafing breast
 The destin'd master of the world didst lead
 This day his promis'd glories to enjoy:
 When Greece affrighted to his arm shall bend;
 Ev'n as at last shall Arimanius fall
 Before thy might, and evil be no more.

The Magi ceas'd their harmony. Behold,
 From her tall ship between a double row
 Of naval warriors, while a golden ray
 Shoots from her standard, Artemisia lands-
 In her enrich'd accoutrements of war,
 The full-wrought huckler, and high-crested helm,
 In Caria first devis'd, across the beach
 Her taw'ring form advance. So the pine,
 From Taurus hewn mature in spiry pride,
 Now by the sailor in its canvass wings
 Voluminous, and dazzling pendants dress'd,
 On Artemisia's own imperial deck
 Is seen to rise, and overtop the grove
 Of crouded masts surrounding. In her heart
 Deep scorn of courtly counsellors she bore,
 Who fill with impious vanity their king,
 As when he lash'd the Hellespont with rods,
 Amid the billows cast a golden chain
 To fetter Neptune. Yet her brow severe
 Unbent its rigour often, as she glanc'd
 On her young son, who, pacing near in arms
 Of Carian guise, proportion'd to his years,

Look'd up, and waken'd by repeated smiles
 Maternal fondness, melting in that eye,
 Which scowl'd on purple flatterers. Her seat
 At the right hand of Xerxes she assumes,
 Invited; while in adoration bow'd
 Tigranes and Phraortes. Prone they lay,
 Across their foreheads spread their servile palms,
 As from a present deity, too bright
 For mortal vision, to conceal their eyes.
 At length in abject phrase Tigranes thus—

‘ O Xerxes, live for ever! Gracious lord,
 Who dost permit thy servants to approach
 Thy awful sight, and prostrate to confess
 Thy majesty and radiance. May the pow'r
 Of Horomazes stretch thy regal arm
 O'er endless nations from the Indian shores
 To those wide floods, which beat Iberian strands,
 From northern Tanais to the source of Nile!
 Still from thy head may Arimanius bend
 Against thy foes his malice! Yonder Greeks,
 Already smit with frenzy by his wrath,
 Reject thy profer'd clemency. They choose
 To magnify thy glory by their fall.’

‘ The monarch, turning to his brother, spake.
 Say, Hyperanthes, can thy soul believe
 These tidings? Sure these slaves have never dar'd
 To face the Grecians, but to delude our ears
 With base impostures, which their fear suggests.’

He frown'd, and Hyperanthes calm reply'd.
 O from his servants may the king avert
 His indignation! Greece was fam'd of old
 For martial spirit, and a dauntless breed.
 Once have try'd their valor. To my words
 Abrocomes can witness. When, thy sire
 And ours, Darius, to Athenian shores
 With Artaphernes brave and Datis sent

Our tender youth; at Marathon we found,
 How weak the hope, that numbers could dismay
 A foe, resolv'd on victory, or death.
 Yet not, as one contemptible, or base,
 Let me appear before thee. Though the Greeks
 With such persisting courage be endu'd,
 Soon as the king shall summon to the field,
 He shall behold me in the dang'rous van
 Exalt my spear, and pierce the hostile ranks,
 Or sink beneath them.' Xerxes swift rejoin'd—

' Why over Asia, and the Lybian soil
 With all their nations doth my potent arm
 Extend its sceptre? Wherefore do I sweep
 Across the earth with millions in my train?
 Why shade the ocean with unnumber'd sails?
 Why all this pow'r, unless th' Almighty's will
 Decreed one master to the subject world;
 And that the earth's extremity alone
 Should bound my empire? He for this reduc'd
 The Nile's revolted sons, enlarg'd my sway
 With sandy Libya, and the sultry clime
 Of Æthiopia. He for this subdu'd
 The Hellespontic foam, and taught the sea
 Obedience to my nod. Then dream no more,
 That heav'n, deserting my imperial cause,
 With courage, more than human, will inspire
 Yon despicable Grecians, and expunge
 The common fears of nature from their breasts.'

The monarch ceas'd. ' Abrocomes began.
 The king commands us to reveal our thoughts.
 Incredulous he hears. But time and truth
 Not Horomazes can arrest. Thy beams
 To instant light'ning, Mithra, mayst thou change
 For my destruction; may th' offended king
 Frown on his servant, cast a loathing eye;
 If the assertion of my lips be false:
 Our further march those Grecians will oppose.'

Amid th' encircling peers Argestes sat,
 A potent prince. O'er Sipylus he reign'd,
 Whose verdant summits overlook'd the waves
 Of Hermus and Pactolus. Either stream,
 Enrich'd by golden sands, a tribute pay'd
 To this great Satrap. Through the servile court
 Yet none was found more practic'd in the arts
 Of mean submission; none more skill'd to gain
 The royal favor; none, who better knew
 The phrase, the look, the gesture of a slave;
 None more detesting Artemisia's worth,
 By her none more despis'd. His master's eye
 He caught, then spake. 'Display thy dazzling state,
 Thou deity of Asia. Greece will hide
 Before thy presence her dejected face.'

Last Artemisia, rising stern, began.
 'Why sits the lord of Asia in his tent,
 Unprofitably wasting precious hours
 In vain discussion, whether yonder Greeks,
 Stang'd in defence of that important pass,
 Will fight, or fly? A question by the sword
 To be decided. Still to narrow straits
 By land, by sea thy council hath confin'd
 Each enterprise of war. In numbers weak
 Twice have th' Athenians in Eubœa's frith
 Repuls'd the navy—But whate'er thy will,
 Be it enforc'd by vigor. Let the king
 The diff'rence see by trial in the field
 Between smooth sound and valor. Then dissolve
 These impotent debates. Ascend thy car.
 The future stage of war thyself explore.
 Behind thee leave the vanity of hope,
 That such a foe to splendor will submit,
 Whom steel, not gold must vanquish. Thou provide
 Thy mail, Argestes. Not in silken robes,
 Not as in council with an oily tongue,
 But spear to spear, and clanging shield to shield,
 Thou soon must grapple on a field of blood.'

The king arose—' No more. Prepare my ear.
The Spartan exile, Demaratus, call.
We will ourselves advance to view the foe.'

The monarch will'd; and suddenly he heard
His trampling horses. High on silver wheels
The iv'ry car with azure sapphires shone,
Cærulean beryls, and the jasper green,
The emerald, the ruby's glowing blush,
The flaming topaz with its golden beam,
The pearl, th' empurpled amethyst, and all
The various gems, which India's mines afford
To deck the pomp of kings. In burnish'd gold
A sculptur'd eagle from behind display'd
His stately neck, and o'er the royal head
Outstretch'd his dazzling wings. Eight gen'rous steeds,
Which on the fam'd Nisæan plain were nurs'd
In wintry Media, drew the radiant car.
Not those of old, to Hercules refus'd
By false Laomedon, nor they, which bore
The son of Thetis through the scatter'd rear
Of Troy's devoted race, with these might vie
In strength, or beauty. In obedient pride
They hear their lord. Exulting, in the air
They toss their foreheads. On their glist'ning chests
The silver manes disport. The king ascends.
Beside his footstool Demaratus sits.
The charioteer now shakes th' effulgent reins,
Strong Patiramphes. At the signal bound
Th' attentive steeds; the chariot flies; behind,
Ten thousand horse in thunder sweep the field.
Down to the sea-beat margin, on a plain
Of vast expansion in battalia wait
The eastern bands. To these th' imperial wheels,
By princes follow'd in a hundred cars.
Proceed. The queen of Caria and her son
With Hyperanthes rode. The king's approach
Swift through the wide arrangement is proclaim'd.
He now draws nigh. Th' invulnerable host

roll back by nations, and admit their lord
 With all his satraps. As from crystal domes,
 built underneath an arch of pendent seas,
 When that stern pow'r, whose trident rules the floods,
 With each cærulean deity ascends,
 Thron'd in his pearly chariot, all the deep
 divides its bosom to th' emerging god;
 O Xerxes rode between the Asian world,
 on either side receding: when, as down
 th' immeasurable ranks his sight was lost,
 a momentary gloom o'ercast his mind,
 While this reflection fill'd his eyes with tears;
 That, soon as time an hundred years has told,
 not one among those millions should survive.
 Hence to obscure thy pride arose that cloud?
 Was it, that once humanity could touch
 a tyrant's breast? Or rather did thy soul
 depine, O Xerxes, at the bitter thought,
 That all thy pow'r was mortal? But the veil
 of sadness soon forsook his brightning eye,
 As with adoring awe those millions bow'd,
 And to his heart relentless pride recall'd.
 To late the mingled prospect he surveys
 Of glitt'ring files unnumber'd, chariots scyth'd,
 On thund'ring axles roll'd, and haughty steeds,
 In sumptuous trappings clad; Barbaric pomp.
 While gorgeous banners to the sun expand
 Their streaming volumes of relucant gold,
 Preminent amidst tiaras gemm'd,
 Engraven helmets, shields emboss'd, and spears
 In number equal to the bladed grass.
 Those living green in vernal beauty clothes
 Thessalia's vale. What pow'rs of sounding verse
 Can to the mind present th' amazing scene?
 Not thee, whom rumour's fabling voice delights,
 Poetic fancy, to my aid I call;
 But thou, historic truth, support my song,
 Which shall the various multitude display,
 Their arms, their manners and their native seats.

The Persians first in scaly corselets shone,
 A gen'rous nation, worthy to enjoy
 The liberty their injur'd fathers lost,
 Whose arms for Cyrus overturn'd the strength
 Of Babylon and Sardis. Pow'r advanc'd
 The victor's head above his country's laws.
 Their tongues were practis'd in the words of truth,
 Their limbs inur'd to ev'ry manly toil,
 To brace the bow, to rule th' impetuous steed,
 To dart the javelin; but untaught to form
 The ranks of war, with unconnected force,
 With ineffectual fortitude they rush'd,
 As on a fence of adamant, to pierce
 Th' indissoluble phalanx. Lances short,
 And osier-woven targets, they oppos'd
 To weighty Grecian spears, and massy shields;
 On ev'ry head tiaras rose like tow'rs,
 Impenetrable. With a golden gloss
 Blaz'd their gay sandals, and the floating reins
 Of each proud courser. Daggers on their thighs,
 Well-furnish'd quivers on their shoulders hung,
 And strongest bows of mighty size they bore.
 Resembling these in arms, the Medes are seen,
 The Cyssians and Hyrcanians. Media once
 From her bleak mountains aw'd the subject east,
 Her kings in cold Ecbatana were thron'd.
 The Cissians march'd from Susa's regal walls,
 From sultry fields, o'erspread with branching palms,
 And white with lillies, water'd by the floods
 Of fam'd Choaspes. His transparent wave
 The costly goblet wafts to Persia's kings.
 All other streams the royal lip disdains.
 Hyrcania's race forsook their fruitful clime,
 Dark in the shadows of expanding oaks,
 To Ceres dear and Bacchus. There the corn,
 Bent by its foodful burden sheds, unreap'd,
 Its plenteous seed, impregnating the soil
 With future harvests; while in ev'ry wood
 Their precious labours on the laden boughs

The honey'd swarms pursue. Assyria's sons
 Display their brazen casques, unskilful work
 Of rude Barbarians. Each sustains a mace,
 Overlaid with iron. Near Euphrates' banks
 Within the mighty Babylonian gates
 They dwell, and where still mightier once in sway
 Old Ninus rear'd its head, th' imperial seat
 Of eldest tyrants. These Chaldæa joins,
 The land of shepherds. From the pastures wide
 Where Belus first discern'd the various course
 Of heav'n's bright planets, and the clust'ring stars
 With names distinguish'd; whence himself was deem'd
 The first of Gods. His sky-ascending fane
 At Babylon the proud Assyrians rais'd.
 Drawn from the bounteous soil, by Oechus lav'd,
 The Bactrians stood, and rough in skins of goats
 The Paricanian archers. Caspian ranks
 From barren mountains, from the joyless coast
 Around the stormy lake, whose name they bore,
 Their scymetars upheld, and cang bows.
 The Indian tribe the threefold host compose.
 Part guide the courser, part the rapid car;
 The rest on foot within the bending cane
 For slaughter fix the iron-pointed reed.
 They o'er the Indus from the distant verge
 Of Ganges passing, left a region lov'd
 For lavish nature. There the season bland
 Bestows a double harvest. Honey'd shrubs,
 The cinamon, the spikenard bless their fields.
 Array'd in native wealth, each warrior shines.
 His ears bright-beaming pendants grace; his hands,
 Uncircled, wear a bracelet, starr'd with gems.
 Such were the nations, who to Xerxes sent
 Their mingled aids of infantry and horse.

Now, muse, recite, what multitudes obscur'd
 The plain on foot, or elevated high
 On martial axles, or on camels beat
 The loosen'd mould. The Parthians first appear,

'Then weak in numbers, from unfruitful hills,
 From woods, nor yet for warlike steeds renown'd,
 Near them the Sogdians, Dadices arrange,
 Gandarians and Chorasmians. Sacian throngs
 From cold Imans pour'd, from Oxus' wave,
 From Cyra, built on Iaxartes' brink,
 A bound of Persia's empire. Wild, untam'd,
 To fury prone their deserts they forsook.
 A bow, a falchion, and a pond'rous ax
 The savage legions arm'd. A pointed casque
 O'er each grim visage rear'd an iron cone.
 In arms like Persians the Saranges stood.
 High, as their knees, the shapely buskins clung
 Around their legs. Magnificent they trod
 In garments richly tinctur'd. Next are seen
 The Pactian, Mycian, and the Utian train,
 In skins of goats rudely-vested. But in spoils
 Of tawny lions, and of spotted pards
 The graceful range of Æthiopians shews
 An equal stature, and a beauteous frame.
 Their torrid region had imbrown'd their cheeks,
 And curl'd their jetty locks. In ancient song
 Renown'd for justice, riches they disdain'd,
 As foes to virtue. From their seat remote
 On Nilus' verge above th' Egyptian bound
 Forc'd by their king's malignity and pride,
 These friends of hospitality and peace,
 Themselves uninjur'd wage reluctant war
 Against a land, whose climate, and whose name
 To them were strange. With hardest stone they point
 The rapid arrow. Bows four cubits long,
 Form'd of elastic branches from the palm,
 They carry knotted clubs and lances, arm'd
 With horns of goats. The Paphlagonians march'd,
 From where Carambis with projected brows
 O'erlooks the dusky Euxien, wrapt in mists,
 From where through flow'rs which paint his vary'd banks
 Parthenius flows. The Ligyan bands succeed;
 The Mati'nians, Mariand'nians next;

To them the Syrian multitudes, who range
 Among the cedars on the shaded ridge
 Of Libanus; who cultivate the glebe,
 Wide-water'd by Orontes; who reside
 Near Daphne's grove, or pluck from loaded palms
 The foodful date, which clusters on the plains
 Of rich Damascus. All, who bear the name
 Of Cappadocians, swell the Syrian host,
 With those, who gather from the fragrant shrub
 The aromatic balsam, and extract
 Its milky juice along the lovely side
 Of Jordan, winding, till immers'd he sleeps
 Beneath a pitchy surface, which obscures
 Th' Asphaltic pool. The Phrygians then advance,
 To them their ancient colony are join'd,
 Armenia's sons. These see the gushing founts
 Of strong Euphrates cleave the yielding earth,
 Then, wide in lakes expanding, hide the plain;
 Whence with collected waters, fierce and deep,
 His passage rending through diminish'd rocks,
 To Babylon he foams. Not so the stream
 Of soft Araxes to the Caspian glides;
 He, stealing imperceptibly, sustains
 The green profusion of Armenia's meads.

Now strange to view, in similar attire,
 But far unlike in manners to the Greeks,
 Appear the Lydians. Wantonness and sport
 Were all their care. Beside Caeyster's brink,
 Or smooth Mæander, winding silent by,
 Beside Pactolean waves, among the vines
 Of Tmolus rising, or the wealthy tide
 Of golden-sanded Herinus they allure
 The sight, enchanted by the graceful dance;
 Or with melodious sweetness charm the air,
 And melt to softest languishment the soul.
 What to the field of danger could incite
 These tender sons of luxury? The lash
 Of their fell sov'reign drove their shiv'ring backs

Through hail and tempest, which enrag'd the main,
 And shook beneath their trembling steps the pile,
 Conjoining Asia and the western world.
 To them Mæonia hot with sulph'rous mines
 Unites her troops. No tree adorns their fields,
 Unbless'd by verdure. Ashes hide the soil:
 Black are the rocks, and ev'ry hill deform'd
 By conflagration. Helmets press their brows.
 Two darts they brandish. On their woolly vests
 A sword is girt; and hairy hides compose
 Their bucklers round and small. The Mysians left
 Olympus wood-envelop'd, left the meads,
 Wash'd by Caicus, and the baneful tide
 Of Lycus, nurse to serpents. Next advance
 An ancient nation, who in early times
 By Trojan arms assail'd, their native land
 Esteem'd less dear, than freedom, and exchang'd
 Their seat on Strymon, where in Thrace he pours
 A freezing current, for the distant flood
 Of fishy Sangar. These, Bithynians nam'd,
 Their habitation to the sacred feet.
 Of Dindymus extend. Yet there they groan
 Beneath oppression, and their freedom mourn
 On Sangar now, as once on Strymon lost.
 The ruddy skins of foxes cloth'd their heads.
 Their shields were fashion'd like the horned mob.
 A vest embrac'd their bodies; while abroad,
 Tint'd with unnumber'd hues, a mantle flow'd.
 But other Thracians, who their former name
 Retain'd in Asia, fulgent morions wore,
 With horns of bulls in imitating brass,
 Curv'd o'er the crested ridge. Phœnician cloth
 Their legs infolded. Wont to chase the wolf,
 A hunter's spear they grasp'd. What nations still
 On either side of Xerxes, while he pass'd,
 Their huge array discov'ring, swell his soul
 With more than mortal pride? The clustered bands
 Of Moschians and Macronians now appear,
 The Mosynœcians, who, on berries fed,

In wooden tow'rs along the Pontic sands
 Repose their painted limbs; the mirthful race
 Of Tibarenians next, whose careless minds
 Delight in play and laughter. Then advance
 In garments, buckled on their spacious chests,
 A people, destin'd in eternal verse,
 Ev'n thine, sublime Mœonides, to live
 These are the Milyans. Solymi their name
 In thy celestial strains, Pisidia's hills
 Their dwelling. Once a formidable train
 They fac'd the strong Bellerophon in war.
 Now doom'd a more tremendous foe to meet,
 Themselves unnerv'd by thralldom, they must leave
 Their putrid bodies to the dogs of Greece.
 The Marians follow. Next is Iria's host,
 Drawn from a region horrid all in thorn,
 A dreary waste of sands, which mock the toil
 Of patient culture; save one favor'd spot,
 Which from the wild emerges like an isle,
 Attir'd in verdure, interspers'd with vines
 Of gen'rous nurture, yielding juice, which scorps
 The injuries of time: yet nature's hand
 Had sown their rocks with coral; had enrich'd
 Their desert hills with veins of sapphires blue,
 Which on the turban shine. On ev'ry neck
 The coral blushes through the num'rous throng
 The Allarodians and Sasperian bands,
 Equipp'd like Colchians, wield a falchion small.
 Their heads are guarded by a helm of wood,
 Their lances short, of hides undress'd their shields.
 The Colchians march'd from Phasis, from the strand,
 Where once Medea, fair enchantress stood
 And wond'ring, view'd the first advent'rous keel,
 Which cut the Pontic foam. From Argo's side
 The demigods descended. They repair'd
 To her fell sire's inhospitable hall.
 His blooming graces Jason there disclos'd.
 With ev'ry art of eloquence divine
 He claim'd the golden fleece. The virgin heard,

She gaz'd in fatal ravishment, and lov'd.
 Then to the hero she resigns her heart.
 Her magic tames the brazen-footed bulls.
 She lulls the sleepless dragon. O'er the main
 He wafts the golden prize, and gen'rous fair,
 The destin'd victim of his treach'rous vows.
 The hostile Colchians then pursu'd their flight
 In vain. By ancient enmity inflam'd,
 Or to recal the long-forgotten wrong
 Compell'd by Xerxes, now they menace Greece
 With desolation. Next in Median garb
 A croud appear'd, who left the peopled isles
 In Persia's gulph, and round Arabia strewn.
 Some in their native topaz were adorn'd,
 From Ophiodes, from Topazos sprung;
 Some in the shells of tortoises, which brood
 Around Casitis' verge. For battle range
 Those who reside where, all beset with palms,
 Erythras lies entomb'd a potent king,
 Who nam'd of old the Erythræan main.
 On chariots scyth'd the Libyans sat, array'd
 In skins terrific, brandishing their darts
 Of wood, well-temper'd in the hard'ning flames.
 Not Lybia's deserts from tyrannic sway
 Could hide her sons; much less could freedom dwell
 Amid the plenty of Arabia's fields:
 Where spicy cassia, where the fragrant reed,
 Where myrrh, and hallow'd frankincence perfume
 The zephyr's wing. A bow of largest size
 Th' Arabian carries. O'er his lucid vest
 Loose floats a mantle, on his shoulder claps'd:
 Two chosen myriads on the lofty backs
 Of camels rode, who match'd the fleetest horse.

Such were the numbers, which, from Asia led,
 In base prostration bow'd before the wheels
 Of Xerxes' chariot. Yet what legions more
 The Malian sand o'ershadow? Forward rolls
 The regal car through nations, who in arms,

In order'd ranks unlike the orient tribes,
 Upheld the spear and buckler. But, untaught
 To bend the servile knee, erect they stood;
 Unless that, mourning o'er the shameful weight
 Of their new bondage, some their brows depress'd,
 Their arms with grief distaining. Europe's sons
 Were these, whom Xerxes by resistless force
 Had gather'd round his standards. Murm'ring hese,
 The sons of Thrace and Macedonia rang'd;
 Here on his steed the brave Thessalian frown'd;
 There pin'd reluctant multitudes, of Greece
 Redundant plants, in colonies dispers'd
 Between Byzantium and the Malian bay.

Through all the nations, who ador'd his pride,
 Or fear'd his pow'r, the monarch now was pass'd;
 Nor yet among those millions could be found
 One, who in beauteous feature might compare,
 Or tow'ring size with Xerxes. O possess'd
 Of all but virtue, doom'd to shew, how mean,
 How weak without her is unbounded pow'r,
 The charm of beauty and the blaze of state,
 How insecure of happiness, how vain!
 Thou, who couldst mourn the common lot, by heav'n
 From none withheld, which oft to thousands proves
 Their only refuge from a tyrant's rage;
 Which in consuming sickness, age or pain,
 Becomes at last a soothing hope to all:
 Thou, who couldst weep, that nature's gentle hand
 Should lay her weary'd off'spring in the tomb;
 Yet couldst remorseless from their peaceful seats
 Lead half the nations, victims to thy pride,
 To famine, plague and massacre a prey;
 What didst thou merit from the injur'd world?
 What sull'rings to compensate for the tears
 Of Asia's mothers, for unpeopled realms,
 For all this waste of nature? On his host
 Th' exulting monarch bends his haughty sight,
 To Demetrius then directs his voice.

‘My father, great Darius, to thy mind
 Recal, O Spartan. Gracious he receiv’d
 Thy wand’ring steps, expell’d their native home.
 My favor too remember. To beguile
 Thy benefactor, and disfigure truth
 Would ill become thee. With consid’rate eyes
 Look back on these battalions. Now declare,
 If yonder Grecians will oppose their march.’

To him the exile. ‘Deem not, mighty lord,
 I will deceive thy goodness by a tale
 To give them glory, who degraded mine.
 Nor be the king offended, while I use
 The voice of truth. The Spartans never fly.’

Contemptuous smil’d the monarch, and resum’d,
 ‘Wilt thou, in Lacedæmon once supreme,
 Encounter twenty Persians? Yet these Greeks
 In greater disproportion must engage
 Our host to-morrow.’ Demaratus then—

‘By single combat were the trial vain
 To shew the pow’r of well-united force,
 Which oft by military skill surmounts
 The weight of numbers. Prince, the diff’rence learn
 Between thy warriors, and the sons of Greece.
 The flow’r, the safeguard of thy numerous camp
 Are mercenaries. These are canton’d round
 Thy provinces. No fertile field demands
 Their painful hand to break the fallow glebe.
 Them to the noon-day toil no harvest calls.
 Nor on the mountain falls the stubborn oak
 By their laborious axe. Their watchful eyes
 Observe not, how the flocks and heifers feed.
 To them, of wealth, of all possessions, void,
 The name of country with an empty sound
 Flies o’er the ear, nor warms their joyless hearts,
 Who share no country. Needy, yet in scorn
 Rejecting labor, wretched by their wants,

Yet profligate through indolence, with limbs
 Enervated and soft, with minds corrupt,
 From misery, debauchery and sloth.
 Are these to battle drawn against a foe,
 Train'd in gymnastie exercise and arms,
 Inur'd to hardship, and the child of toil;
 Wont through the freezing show'r, the wintry storm
 O'er his own glebe the tardy ox to goad,
 Or in the sun's impetuous heat to glow
 Beneath the burden of his yellow sheaves;
 Whence on himself, on her, whose faithful arms
 Infold him joyful, on a growing race,
 Which glad his dwelling, plenty he bestows
 With independence. When to battle call'd,
 For them his dearest comfort; and his care,
 And for the harvest, promis'd to his toil,
 He lifts the shield, nor shuns unequal force.
 Such are the troops of ev'ry state in Greece—
 One only yields a breed more warlike still,
 Of whom selected bands appear in sight,
 All citizens of Sparta. They the glebe
 Have never turn'd, nor bound the golden sheaf.
 They are devoted to severer tasks,
 For war alone, their sole delight and care.
 From infancy to manhood they are train'd
 To winter watches, to inclement skies,
 To plunge through torrents, brave the tusky boar,
 To arms and wounds; a discipline of pain
 So fierce, so constant, that to them a camp
 With all its hardships is a seat of rest,
 And war itself remission from their toil.'

'Thy words are folly, with redoubled scorn
 Returns the monarch. Doth not freedom dwell
 Among the Spartan? Therefore will they shun
 Superior foes. The unrestrain'd and free
 Will fly from danger; while my vassals, born
 To absolute controulment from their king,
 Know, if th' allotted station they desert,
 The scourge awaits them, and my heavy wrath.'

To this the exile: 'O conceive not, prince,
That Spartans want an object, where to fix
Their eyes in rev'rence, in obedient dread.
To them more awful, than the name of king
To Asia's trembling millions, is the law;
Whose sacred voice enjoins them to confront
Unnumber'd foes, to vanquish, or to die.'

Here Demaratus pauses. Xerxes halts.
Its long defile Thermopylæ presents.
The satraps leave their cars. On foot they form
A splendid orb around their lord. By chance
The Spartans, then compos'd th' external guard.
They, in a martial exercise employ'd,
Heed not the monarch, or his gaudy train;
But poise the spear, protended, as in fight;
Or lift their adverse shields in single strife;
Or, trooping, forward rush, retreat and wheel
In ranks unbroken, and with equal feet.
While others, calm, beneath their polish'd helms
Draw down their hair, whose length of sable curls
O'erspread their necks with terror. Xerxes here
The exile questions—'What do these intend,
Who with assiduous hands adjust their hair?'

To whom the Spartan—'O imperial lord,
Such is their custom, to adorn their heads,
When full determin'd to encounter death.
Bring down thy nations in resplendent steel;
Arm, if thou canst, the gen'ral race of man,
All who possess the regions unexplor'd
Beyond the Ganges, all, whose wand'ring steps
Above the Caspian range the Scythian wild,
With those who drink the secret fount of Nile;
Yet to Laconian bosoms shall dismay
Remain a stranger.' Fervour from his lips
Thus breaks aloud; when, gushing from his eyes,
Resistless grief o'erflows his cheeks. Aside

His head he turns. He weeps in copious streams.
 The keen remembrance of his former state,
 His dignity, his greatness, and the sight
 Of those brave ranks, which thus unshaken stood,
 And spread amazement through the world in arms,
 Excite these sorrows. His impassion'd looks
 Review the godlike warriors, who beneath
 His standard once victorious fought; who call'd
 Him once their king; their leader: then again,
 O'ercharg'd with anguish, he bedews with tears
 His rev'rend beard; in agony bemoans
 His faded honors, his illustrious name
 Forgotten long, his majesty defil'd
 By exile, by dependence. So obscur'd
 By sordid moss, and ivy's creeping leaf,
 Some princely palace, or stupendous fane
 Magnificent in ruin, nods; where time
 From under shelving architraves hath mow'd
 The column down, and cleft the pond'rous dome.

Not unobserv'd by Hyperanthes, mourn'd
 Th' unhappy Spartan. Kindly in his own
 He press'd the exile's hand, and thus humane—

'O Demaratus, in this grief I see,
 How just thy praises of Laconia's state.
 Though cherish'd here with universal love,
 Thou still deplor'st thy absence from her face,
 How'er averse to thine. But swift relief
 From indignation borrow. Call to mind
 Thy injuries. Th' auspicious fortune bless,
 Which led thee far from calumny and fraud,
 To peace, to honor, in the Persian court.'

As Demaratus, with a grateful mind,
 His answer was preparing, Persia's king
 Stern interrupted—'Soon as morning shines,
 Do you, Tigranes and Phraortes, head
 The Medes and Cissians. Bring these Grecians bound.'

This said, the monarch to his camp returns.
 Th' attendant princes reascend their cars,
 Save Hyperanthes, by the Carian queen
 Detain'd, who thus began—'Impartial, brave,
 Nurs'd in a court, yet virtuous, let my heart
 To thee its feelings undisguis'd reveal.
 Thou hear'st thy royal brother. He demands
 These Grecians bound. Why stops his mandate there?
 Why not command the mountains to remove,
 Or sink to level plains. Yon Spartans view,
 Their weighty arms, their countenance. To die
 My gratitude instructs me in the cause
 Of our imperial master. To succeed
 Is not within the shadow of my hopes
 At this dire pass. What evil genius sways?
 Tigranes, false Argestes, and the rest
 In name a council, ceaseless have oppos'd
 My dictates, oft repeated in despite
 Of purpled flatt'ers, to embark a force,
 Which, pouring on Laconia, might confine
 These sons of valour to their own defence.
 Vain are my words. The royal ear admits
 Their sound alone; while adulation's notes
 In Siren sweetness penetrate his heart,
 There lodge ensnaring mischief.' In a sigh
 To her the prince—'O faithful to thy lord,
 Discreet adviser, and in action firm,
 What can I answer? My afflicted soul
 Must seek its refuge in a feeble hope.
 Thou mayst be partial to thy Doric race,
 Mayst magnify our danger. Let me hope,
 What'er th' danger, if extreme, believe,
 That Hyperanthes for his prince can bleed
 Not with less zeal than Spartans for their laws.'

They separate. To Xerxes he repairs.
 The queen, surrounded by the Carian guard,
 Stays and retraces with sagacious ken
 The destin'd field of war, the vary'd space,

Its depth, its confines both of hill and sea,
 Mean time a scene more splendid hath allur'd
 Her son's attention. His transported sight
 With ecstasy like worship long pursues
 The pomp of Xerxes in retreat, the throne,
 Which shew'd their idol to the nations round,
 The bounding steeds, caparison'd in gold,
 The plumes, the chariots, standards. He excites
 Her care, express'd in these pathetic strains.—

'Look on the king with gratitude. His sire
 Protected thine. Himself upholds our state.
 By loyalty inflexible repay
 The obligation. To immortal pow'rs
 The adoration of thy soul confine;
 And look undazzled on the pomp of man
 Most weak when highest. Then the jealous gods
 Watch to supplant him. They his paths, his courts,
 His chambers fill with flatt'ry's pois'nous swarms,
 Whose honey'd bane, by kingly pride devour'd,
 Consumes the health of kingdoms. Here the boy
 By an attention, which surpass'd his years,
 Unlocks her inmost bosom. Thrice accurs'd
 Be those, th' indignant heroine pursues,
 'Those, who have tempted their imperial lord
 To that prepost'rous arrogance, which cast
 Chains in the deep to manacle the waves,
 Chastis'd with stripes in heav'n's offended sight
 The Hellespont, and fondly now demands
 The Spartans bound. O child, my soul's delight,
 Train'd by my care to equitable sway,
 And imitation of the gods by deeds
 To merit their protection, heed my voice.
 They, who alone can tame, or swell the floods,
 Compose the winds, or guide their strong career,
 O'erwhelming human greatness, will confound
 Such vanity in mortals. On our fleet
 Their indignation has already fall'n.
 Perhaps our boasted army is prepar'd
 A prey, for death to vindicate their pow'r?

This said, a curious search in ev'ry part
 Her eye renews. Adjoining to the straits,
 Fresh bloom'd a thicket of entwining shrubs,
 And seeming fence to some sequester'd ground,
 By travellers unbeaten. Swift her guards
 Address'd their spears to part the pliant boughs.
 Held back, they yield a passage to the queen
 And princely boy. Delicious to their sight,
 Soft dales, mæand'ring, shew their flow'ry laps
 Among rude piles of nature. In their sides
 Of rock are mansions hewn; nor loaden trees
 Of cluster'd fruit are wanting, but no sound,
 Except of brooks in murmur, and the song
 Of winged warblers, meets the list'ning ear.
 No grazing herd, no flock, nor human form,
 Is seen; no careful husband, at his toil,
 Beside her threshold no industrious wife,
 No playful child. Instructive to her son
 The princess then—'Already these abodes
 Are desolate. Once happy in their homes,
 Th' inhabitants forsake them. Pleasing scene
 Of nature's bounty, soon will savage Mars
 Deform the lovely ringlets of thy shrubs,
 And coarsely pluck thy violated fruits,
 Unripe: will deafen with his clangour fell,
 Thy tuneful choirs. I mourn thy destin'd spoil,
 Yet come thy first despoiler. Captains, plant,
 Ere morning breaks, my secret standard here.
 Come, boy, away. Thy safety will I trust
 To Demaratus; while thy mother tries,
 With these her martial followers, what sparks;
 Left by our Doric fathers, yet inflame
 Their sons and daughters in a stern debate
 With other Dorians. who have never breath'd
 The soft'ning gales of Asia, never bow'd
 In forc'd allegiance to Barbarian thrones.
 'Thou heed my order. Thos. ingenuous looks
 Of discontent suppress. For thee this fight
 Were too severe a lesson. Thou might'st bleed

Among the thousands fated to expire
 By Sparta's lance. Let Artemisia die,
 Ye all-disposing rulers, but protect
 Her son.' She ceas'd. The lioness, who reigns
 Queen of the forest, terrible in strength,
 And prone to fury, thus, by nature taught,
 Melts o'er her young in blandishment and love.

Now slowly tow'rd's the Persian camp her steps
 In silence she directed; when a voice,
 Sent from a rock, accessible which seem'd
 To none but feather'd passengers of air,
 By this reproof detain'd her—'Caria's queen
 Art thou, to Greece by Doric blood ally'd?
 Com'st thou to lay her fruitful meadows waste—
 'Thou homager of tyrants?' Upward gaz'd
 Th' astonish'd princess. Lo! a female shape,
 Tall and majestic, from th' impendent ridge
 Look'd awful down. A holy fillet bound
 Her graceful hair, loose flowing. Seldom wept
 Great Artemisia. Now a springing tear
 Between her eyelids gleam'd. 'Too true, she sigh'd
 A homager of tyrants! Voice austere,
 And presence half-divine! Again the voice.

'O Artemisia, hide thy Doric sword.
 Let no Barbarian tyrant through thy might,
 Thy counsels, valiant as thou art and wise,
 Consume the holy fanes, deface the tombs,
 Subvert the laws of Greece, her sons enthrall.'

The queen made no reply. Her breast-plate heav'd
 The tremulous attire of cov'ring mail
 Confess'd her struggle. She at length exclaim'd—
 'Olympian thund'rer, from thy neighb'ring hill,
 Of sacred oaths remind me!' Then aside
 She turns, to shun that majesty of form,
 In solemn sounds upbraiding. Torn her thoughts

She feels. A painful conflict she endures,
With recollection of her Doric race;
Till gratitude, reviving, arms her breast.
Her royal benefactor she recalls,
Back to his sight precipitates her steps.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK V.

THE ARGUMENT.

Leonidas, rising by break of day, hears the intelligence, which Agis and Melibœus bring from the upper pass; then commands a body of Arcadians, with the Platæans and Thespians, to be drawn out for battle under the conduct of Demophilus in that part of Thermopylæ which lies close to the Phocian wall, from whence he harangues them. The enemy approaches. Diomedon kills Tigranes in single combat. Both armies join battle. Dithyrambus kills Phraortes. The Persians, entirely defeated, are pursued by Demophilus to the extremity of the pass. The Arcadians, inconsiderately advancing beyond it, fall into an ambush, which Artemisia had laid to cover the retreat of the Persians. She kills Clonius, but is herself repuls'd by Demophilus. Diomedon and Dithyrambus give chase to her broken forces over the plains in the sight of Persia's camp, whence she receives no assistance. She rallies a small body, and, facing the enemy, disables Dithyrambus by a blow on his helmet. This puts the Grecians into some confusion, and gives her an opportunity of preserving the remainder of her Carians by a timely retreat. She gains the camp, accuses Argestes of treachery; but, pacified by Demaratus, is accompanied by him with a thousand horse to collect the dead bodies of her soldiers for sepulchre.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK V.

AURORA dawn'd. Leonidas arose.
With Melibœus, Agis, now return'd,
Address'd the king—'Along the mountain's side
We bent our journey. On our way a voice,
Loud from a crag, on Melibœus call'd.
He look'd and answer'd. Mycon, ancient friend!
Far hast thou driv'n thy bearded train to day;
But fortunate thy presence. None like thee,
Inhabitant of Æta from thy birth,
Can furnish that intelligence, which Greece
Wants for her safety. Mycon shew'd a track.
We mounted high. The summit, where we stopp'd,
Gave to the sight a prospect wide o'er hills
O'er dales and forests, rocks, and dashing floods
In cataracts. The object of our search
Beneath us lay, the secret pass to Greece,
Where not five warriors in a rank can tread.
We thence descended to the Phocian camp,
Beset with scatter'd oaks, which rose and spread
In height and shade; on whose sustaining boughs
Were hung in snowy folds a thousand tents,
Containing each a Phocian heavy-mail'd
With two light-weapon'd menials. Northward ends
The vale, contracted to that narrow strait,
Which first we saw with Mycon.' Prudent care
Like yours alleviates mine, well pleas'd the king
Reply'd. 'Now, Agis, from Arcadia's bands
Select a thousand spears. To them unite
The Thespians and Platæans. Draw their lines
Beneath the wall, which fortifies the pass.
There, close embody'd, will their might repulse
The num'rous foe. Demophilus salute.

Approv'd in martial service, him I name
 The chief supreme.' Obedient to his will
 Th' appointed warriors, issuing from the tents,
 Fill their deep files, and watch the high command.
 So round their monarch in his stormy hall
 The winds assemble. From his dusky throne
 His dreadful mandates Æolus proclaims
 To swell the main, or heav'n with clouds deform,
 Or bend the forest from the mountain's brow.
 Laconia's leader from the rampart's height
 To battle thus the list'ning host inflames.

' This day. O Grecians, countrymen and friends,
 Your wives, your offspring, your paternal seats,
 Your parents, country, liberty and laws
 Demand your swords. You gen'rous, active, brave,
 Vers'd in the various discipline of Mars,
 Are now to grapple with ignoble foes,
 In war unskilful, nature's basest dross,
 And thence a monarch's mercenary slaves.
 Relax'd their limbs, their spirits are deprav'd
 By eastern sloth and pleasures. Hire their cause,
 Their only fruit of victory is spoil.
 They know not freedom, nor its lib'ral cares.
 Such is the flow'r of Asia's host. The rest,
 Who fill her boasted numbers, are a croud,
 Forc'd from their homes; a populace, in peace
 By jealous tyranny disarm'd in war
 Their tyrant's victims. Taught in passive grief
 To bear the rapine, cruelty and spurns
 Of Xerxes' mercenary band they pine
 In servitude to slaves. With terror sounds
 The trumpet's clangour in their trembling ears.
 Unwonted loads, the buckler and the lance
 Their hands sustain, encumber'd, and present
 The mockery of war—But ev'ry eye
 Shoots forth impatient flames. Your gallant breasts
 Too long their swelling spirit have confin'd.
 Go then, ye sons of liberty; go, sweep

These bondmen from the field. Resistless rend
The glitt'ring standard from their servile grasp.
Hurl to the ground their ignominious heads,
The warrior's helm profaning. Think the shades
Of your forefathers lift their sacred brows
Here to enjoy the glory of their sons.'

He spake. Loud pæans issue from the Greeks.
In fierce reply Barbarian shouts ascend
From hostile nations, thronging down the pass.
Such is the roar of *Ætna*, when his mouth
Displodes combustion from his sulph'rous depths
To blast the smiles of nature. Dauntless stood
In deep array before the Phocian wall
The phalanx, wedg'd with implicated shields,
And spears protended, like the raceful range
Of arduous elms, whose interwoven boughs
Before some rural palace wide expand
Their venerable umbrage to retard
The north's impetuous wing. As o'er the main
In lucid rows the rising waves reflect
The sun's effulgence; so the Grecian helms
Return'd his light, which o'er their convex pour'd
A splendour, scatter'd through the dancing plumes.

Down rush the foes. Exulting in their van,
Their haughty leader shake his threat'ning lance,
Provoking battle. Instant from his rank
Diomedon bursts furious. On he strides,
Confronts Tigranes, whom he thus defies.

'Now are we met, Barbarian: Wouldst thou prove
Thy actions equal to thy vaunts, command
Thy troops to halt, while thou and I engage.'

Tigranes, turning to the Persians, spake
'My friends and soldiers, check your martial haste,
While my strong lance that Grecian's pride confounds.'

He ceas'd. In dreadful opposition soon
 Each combatant advanc'd. Their sinewy hands
 Grip'd fast their spears, high brandish'd. Thrice they
 drove
 With well directed force the pointed steel
 At either's throat, and thrice their wary shields
 Repell'd the menac'd wound. The Asian chief
 At length, with pow'rs collected for the stroke,
 His weapon rivets in the Grecian targe.
 Aside Diomedon inclines, and shuns
 Approaching fate; then all his martial skill
 Undaunted summons. His forsaken spear
 Beside him cast, his falchion he unsheaths,
 The blade, descending on Tigranes' arm,
 That instant struggling to redeem his lance,
 The nervous hand dissevers. Pale affright
 Unmans the Persian; while his active foe
 Full on his neck discharg'd the rapid sword,
 Which open'd wide the purple gates of death.
 Low sinks Tigranes in eternal shade.
 His prostrate limbs the conqueror bestrides;
 Then in a tuft of blood distilling hair
 His hand entwining, from the mangled trunk
 The head disjoins, and whirls with matchless strength
 Among the adverse legions. All in dread
 Recoil'd, where'er the ghastly visage flew
 In sanguine circles, and pursu'd its track
 Of horror through the air. Not more amaz'd,
 A barb'rous nation, whom the cheerful dawn
 Of science ne'er illumin'd, view on high
 A meteor, waving its portentous fires;
 Where oft, as superstition vainly dreams,
 Some demon sits amid the baneful blaze,
 Dispersing plague and desolation round.
 Awhile the stern Diomedon remain'd
 Triumphant o'er the dire dismay, which froze
 The heart of Persia; then with haughty pace
 In sullen joy among his gladsome friends
 Resum'd his station. Still the hostile throng

In consternation motionless suspend
The charge. Their drooping hearts Phraortes warms.

'Heav'n! can one leader's fate appal this host,
Which counts a chain of princes for its chiefs?
Behold Phraortes. From Niphates' ridge
I draw my subject files. My hardy toil
Through pathless woods and deserts hath explored
The tiger's cavern. This unconquer'd hand
Hath from the lion rent his shaggy hide.
So through this field of slaughter will I chase
Yon vaunting Greek.' His ardent words revive
Declining valor in the van. His lance
Then in the rear he brandishes. The croud
Before his threat'ning ire, affrighted, roll
Their numbers headlong on the Grecian steel.
Thus with his trident ocean's angry god
From their vast bottom turns the mighty mass
Of waters upward, and o'erwhelms the beach.

Tremendous frown'd the fierce Plataean chief
Full in the battle's front. His ample shield
Like a strong bulwark prominent he rais'd,
Before the line. There thunder'd all the storm
Of darts and arrows. His undaunted train
In emulating ardour charg'd the foe.
Where'er they turn'd the formidable spears,
Which drench'd the glebe of Marathon in blood,
Barbarian dead lay heap'd. Diomedon
Led on the slaughter. From his nodding crest
The sable plumes shook terror. Asia's host
Shrunk back, as blasted by the piercing beams
Of that unconquerable sword, which fell
With light'ning's swiftness on dissever'd helms,
And, menacing Tigranes' doom to all,
Their multitude dispers'd. The furious chief,
Encompass'd round by carnage, and besmear'd
With sanguine drops, inflames his warlike friends.

' O Dithyrambus, let thy deeds this day
 Surmount their wonted lustre. Thou in arms,
 Demophilus, worn grey, thy youth recal.
 Behold these slaves without resistance bleed.
 Advance, my hoary friend. Propitious fame
 Smiles on thy years. She grants thy aged hand
 To pluck fresh laurels for thy honor'd brow.'

As, when endu'd with Promethean heat,
 The molten clay respir'd; a sudden warmth
 Glows in the venerable Thespian's veins;
 In ev'ry sinew new born vigour swells.
 His falchion, thund'ring on Cherasmes' helm,
 The forehead cleaves. Ecbatana to war
 Sent forth Cherasmes. From her potent gates
 He proud in hope her swarming numbers led.
 Him Ariazus and Peucestes join'd,
 His martial brothers. They attend his fate,
 By Dithyrambus pierc'd. Their hoary sire
 Shall o'er his solitary palace roam;
 Lamenting loud his childless years, shall curse
 Ambition's fury, and the lust of war,
 Then, pining, bow in anguish to the grave.

Next by the fierce Platean's fatal sword
 Expir'd Damates, once the host and friend
 Offall'n Tigranes. By his side to fight
 He left his native bands. Of Syrian birth
 In Daphne he resided, near the grove,
 Whose hospitable laurels in their shade
 Conceal'd the virgin fugitive, averse
 To young Apollo. Hither she retir'd
 Far from her parent stream. Here fables feign,
 Herself a laurel chang'd her golden hair
 To verdant leaves in this retreat, the grove
 Of Daphne call'd, the seat of rural bliss,
 Fann'd by the breath of zephyrs, and with rills
 From bubbling founts irriguous, Syria's boast,

The happy rival of Thessalia's vale,
Now hid forever from Damates' eyes.

Demophilus, wise leader, soon improves
Advantage. All the vet'rans of his troop,
In age his equals, to condense the files,
To rivet close their bucklers he commands.
As some broad vessel, heavy in her strength,
But well compacted, when a fav'ring gale
Invites the skilful master to expand
The sails at large, her slow but steady course
Impels through myriads of dividing waves;
So, unresisted, through Barbarian throngs
The hoary phalanx pass'd. Arcadia's sons
Pursu'd more swift. Gigantic Clonius press'd
The yielding Persians, who before him sunk,
Crush'd like vile stubble underneath the steps
Of some glad peasant, visiting his fields
Of new shorn harvest. On the gen'ral rout
Phraortes look'd intrepid still. He sprang
O'er hills of carnage to confront the foe.
His own inglorious friends he thus reproach'd.

'Fly then, ye cowards, and desert your chief.
Yet single here my target shall oppose
The shock of thousands.' Raging, he impels
His deathful point through Aristander's breast.
Him Dithyrambus lov'd. A sacred bard,
Rever'd for justice, for his verse renown'd,
He sung the deeds of heroes, those who fell,
Or those who conquer'd in their country's cause,
Th' enraptur'd soul inspiring with the love
Of glory, earn'd by virtue. His high strain
The muses favor'd from their neighb'ring bow'rs,
And bless'd with heav'nly melody his lyre.
No more from Thespia shall his feet ascend
The shady steep of Helicon; no more
The stream divine of Aganippe's fount
Bedew his lip harmonious; nor his hands,
Which, dying, grasp the unforsaken lance,

And prostrate buckler, ever more accord
 His lofty numbers to the sounding shell.
 Lo! Dithyrambus weeps. Amid the rage
 Of war and conquest swiftly gushing tears
 Find one sad moment's interval to fall
 On his pale friend. But soon the victor proves
 His stern revenge: Through shield and corselet plung'd,
 His forceful blade divides the Persian's chest;
 Whence issue streams of royal blood, deriv'd
 From ancestors who sway'd in Ninus old
 Th' Assyrian sceptre. He to Xerxes' throne
 A tributary satrap rul'd the vales,
 Where Tigris swift between the parted hills,
 Of tall Niphates drew his foamy tide,
 Impregnating the meads. Phraortes sinks,
 Not instantly expiring. Still his eyes
 Flash indignation, while the Persians fly.

Beyond the Malian entrance of the straits
 Th' Arcadians rush; when, unperceiv'd, till felt,
 Spring from concealment in a thicket deep
 New swarms of warriors, clust'ring on the flank
 Of these unwary Grecians. Tow'rd the bay
 They shrink. They totter on the fearful edge,
 Which overhangs a precipice. Surpris'd,
 The strength of Clonius fails. His giant bulk
 Beneath the chieftain of th' assailing band
 Falls prostrate. Thespians and Plataeans wave
 Auxiliar ensigns. They encounter foes,
 Resembling Greeks in discipline and arms.
 Dire is the shock. What less, than Caria's queen
 In their career of victory could check
 Such warriors? Fierce she struggles; while the rout
 Of Medes and Cissians carry to the camp
 Contagious terror: thence no succour flows.
 Demophilus stands firm; the Carian band
 At length recoil before him. Keen pursuit
 He leaves to others, like th' almighty sire,
 Who sits unshaken on his throne, while floods,

His instruments of wrath, o'erwhelm the earth,
 And whirlwinds level on her hills the growth
 Of proudest cedars. Through the yielding croud
 Plataea's chief and Dithyrambus range,
 Triumphant, side by side. Thus o'er the field,
 Where bright Alpheus heard the rattling car,
 And concave hoof along his echoing banks,
 Two gen'rous coursers, link'd in mutual reins,
 In speed, in ardour equal, beat the dust,
 To reach the glories of Olympia's goal.
 'Th' intrepid heroes on the plain advance,
 They press the Carian rear. Not long the queen
 Endures that shame. Her people's dying groans
 Transpierce her bosom. On their bleeding limbs
 She looks maternal, feels maternal pangs.
 A troop she rallies. Goddess-like she turns,
 Not less, than Pallas with her Gorgon shield
 Whole ranks she covers like th' imperial bird
 Extending o'er a nest of callow young
 Her pinion broad, and pointing fierce her beak,
 Her claws outstretch'd. The Thespian's ardent hand
 From common lives refraining, hastes to snatch
 More splendid laurels from that nobler head.
 His pond'rous falchion, swift descending, bears
 Her buckler down, thence glancing, cuts the thong,
 Which holds her headpiece fast. That goldeen fence
 Drops down. Thick tresses, unconfin'd, disclose
 A female warrior; one, whose summer pride
 Of fleeting beauty had begun to fade,
 Yet by th' heroic character supply'd,
 Which grew more awful, as the touch of time
 Remov'd the soft'ning graces. Back he steps,
 Unmann'd by wonder. With indignant eyes,
 Fire-darting, she advances. Both her hands
 Full on his crest discharge the furious blade.
 The forceful blow compels him to recede
 Yet further back, unwounded, though confus'd.
 His soldiers flock around him. From a scene
 Of blood more distant speeds Plataea's chief:

The fair occasion of suspended fight
 She seizes, bright in glory wheels away,
 And saves her Carian remnant. While his friend
 In fervent sounds Diomedon bespake.

‘If thou art slain, I curse this glorious day.
 Be all thy trophies, be my own accurs’d.’

The youth, recover’d, answers in a smile—
 ‘I am unhurt. The weighty blow proclaim’d
 The queen of Caria, or Bellona’s arm.
 Our longer stay Demophilus may blame.
 Let us prevent his call. This said, their steps
 They turn, both striding through empurpled heaps
 Of arms, and mangled slain, themselves with gore
 Distain’d like two grim tigers, who have forc’d
 A nightly mansion, on the desert rais’d
 By some lone-wand’ring traveller, then, dy’d
 In human crimson, through the forest deep
 Back to their covert’s dreary gloom retire.

Stern Artemisia, sweeping o’er the field,
 Bursts into Asia’s camp. A furious look
 She casts around. Abrocomes remote
 With Hyperanthes from the king were sent.
 She sees Argestes in that quarter chief,
 Who from battalions numberless had spar’d
 Not one to succour, but his malice gorg’d
 With her distress. Her anger now augments.
 Revenge frowns gloomy on her darken’d brow.
 He cautious moves to Xerxes, where he sat
 High on his car. She follows. Lost her helm,
 Resign’d to sportive winds her cluster’d locks,
 Wild, but majestic like the waving boughs
 Of some proud elm, the glory of the grove,
 And full in foliage. Her emblazon’d shield
 With gore is tarnish’d. Pale around are seen
 All faint, all ghastly from repeated wounds
 Her bleeding soldiers. Brandishing her sword,
 ‘To them she points, to Xerxes thus she speaks.

Behold these mangled Carians, who have spent,
 Their vital current in the king's defence,
 Ev'n in his sight; while Medes and Cissians fled,
 By these protected, whom Argestes saw
 Pursu'd by slaughter to thy very camp,
 Yet left unhelp'd to perish. Ruling sire,
 Let Horomazes be thy name, or Jove,
 To thee appealing, of the king I claim
 A day for justice. Monarch, to my arm
 Give him a prey. Let Artemisia's truth
 Chastise his treason.' With an eye submiss,
 A mien obsequious, and a soothing tone
 To cheat the king, to moderate her ire
 Argestes utters these fallacious words.

'May Horomazes leave the fiend at large
 To blast my earthly happiness, confine
 Amid the horrors of his own abode
 My ghost hereafter, if the sacred charge
 Of Xerxes' person was not my restraint,
 My sole restraint! To him our all is due,
 Our all how trifling, with his safety weigh'd,
 His preservation I prefer to fame,
 And bright occasion for immortal deeds
 Forego in duty. Else my helpful sword,
 Fair heroine of Asia, hadst thou seen
 Among the foremost blazing. Lo! the king
 A royal present will on thee bestow,
 Perfumes and precious unguents on the dead,
 A golden wreath to each survivor brave.'

Aw'd by her spirit, by the flatt'ers spell
 Deluded, languid through dismay and shame
 At his defeat, the monarch for a time
 Sat mute, at length unlock'd his falt'ring lips.

'Thou hear'st, great princess. Rest content. His words
 I ratify. Yet farther, I proclaim
 Thee of my train first councillor and chief.

O eagle-ey'd discernment in the king!
 O wisdom equal to his boundless power!
 The purpled sycophant exclaims. 'Thou seest
 Her matchless talents. Wanting her, thy fleet,
 The floating bulwark of our hopes, laments,
 Foil'd in her absence, in her conduct safe.
 Thy penetrating sight directs the field;
 There let her worth be hazarded no more.'

'Thy words are wise, the blinded prince rejoins.
 Return, brave Carian, to thy naval charge.'

Thus to remove her from the royal ear
 Malicious guile prevails. Redoubled rage
 Swells in her bosom. Demaratus sees
 And calms the storm by rend'ring up his charge
 To her maternal hand. Her son belov'd
 Dispels the furies. Then the Spartan thus.

'O Artemisia, of the king's command
 Be thou observant. To thy slaughter'd friends
 Immediate care, far other, than revenge,
 Is due. The ravens gather. From his nest
 Among those cliffs the eagle's rapid flight
 Denotes his scent of carnage. Thou, a Greek,
 Well know'st the duty sacred to the dead.
 Depart; thy guide is piety. Collect,
 For honorable sepulchres prepare
 Those bodies, mark'd with honorable wounds.
 I will assist thee. Xerxes will entrust
 To my command a chosen guard of horse.'

As oft, when storms in summer have o'ercast
 The night with double darkness, only pierc'd
 By heav'n's blue fire, while thunder shakes the pole,
 The orient sun, diffusing genial warmth,
 Refines, the troubled air; the blast is mute;
 Death-pointed flames disperse; and placid Jove
 Looks down in smiles: so prudence from the lips

Of Demaratus, by his tone, his mien,
His aspect strength'ning smooth persuasion's flow,
Compos'd her spirit. Shé with him departs.
The king assigns a thousand horse to guard
Th' illustrious exile, and heroic dame.



LEONIDAS.

BOOK VI.

THE ARGUMENT.

The Grecian commanders after the pursuit retire for refreshment to a cave in the side of mount Oeta. Demophilus returns to the camp; Diomedon remains in the cave: while Dithyrambus, discovering a passage through it, ascends to the temple of the Muses. After a long discourse with Melissa, the daughter of Oileus, she entrusts him with a solemn message to Leonidas. Dithyrambus deposes this charge to Megistias, the augur. Leonidas, recalling the forces, first engaged, sends down a fresh body. Diomedon and Dithyrambus are permitted on their own request to continue in the field with the Plateans. By the advice of Diomedon the Grecians advance to the broadest part of Thermopylæ, where they form a line of twenty in depth, consisting of the Plateans, Mantineans, Tegeans, Thebans, Corinthians, Phliasians and Mycenæans. The Spartans compose a second line in a narrower part. Behind them are placed the light armed troops under Alpheus, and further back a phalanx of Locrians under Medon, the son of Oileus. Dienecees commands the whole.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK VI.

NOW Dithyrambus and Plataea's chief,
Their former post attaining, had rejoin'd
Demophilus. Recumbent on his shield
Phraortes, gasping there, attracts their sight.
To him in pity Thespia's gallant youth
Approaching, thus his gen'rous soul express'd—

‘Liv'st thou, brave Persian? By propitious Jove,
From whom the pleasing stream of mercy flows
Through mortal bosoms, less my soul rejoice'd,
When fortune bless'd with victory my arm,
Than now to raise thee from this field of death.’

His languid eyes the dying prince unclos'd,
Then with expiring voice. ‘Vain man, forbear
To proffer me, what soon thyself must crave.
The day is quite extinguish'd in these orbs.
One moment fate allows me to disdain
Thy mercy, Grecian. Now I yield to death.’

This effort made, the haughty spirit fled.
So shoots a meteor's transitory gleam
Through nitrous folds of black nocturnal clouds,
Then dissipates forever. O'er the corse
His rev'rend face Demophilus inclin'd,
Pois'd on his lance, and thus address'd the slain.

‘Alas! how glorious were that bleeding breast,
Had justice brac'd the buckler on thy arm,
And to preserve a people bade thee die.
Who now shall mourn thee? Thy ungrateful king

Will soon forget thy worth. Thy native land
 May raise an empty monument, but feel
 No public sorrow. Thy recorded name
 Shall wake among thy countrymen no sighs
 For their lost hero. What to them avail'd
 Thy might, thy dauntless spirit? Not to guard
 Their wives, their offspring from th' oppressor's hand;
 But to extend oppression didst thou fall,
 Perhaps with inborn virtues in thy soul,
 Which, but thy froward destiny forbade,
 By freedom cherish'd, might have bless'd mankind.
 All bounteous nature, thy impartial laws
 To no selected race of men confine
 The sense of glory, fortitude, and all
 The nobler passions, which exalt the mind,
 And render life illustrious. These thou plant'st
 In ev'ry soil. But freedom like the sun
 Must warm the gen'rous seeds. By her alone
 They bloom, they flourish; while oppression blasts
 The tender virtues: hence a spurious growth,
 False honor, savage valor taint the soul,
 And wild ambition: hence rapacious pow'r
 The ravag'd earth unpeoples, and the brave,
 A feast for dogs, th' ensanguin'd field bestrew.'

He said. Around the venerable man
 The warriors throng'd attentive. Conquest hush'd
 Its joyful transports. O'er the horrid field,
 Rude scene so late of tumult, all was calm.
 So when the song of Thracian Orpheus drew
 To Hebrus' margin from their dreary seats
 The savage breed, which Hæmus, wrapp'd in clouds,
 Pangæus cold, and Rhodopean snows
 In blood and discord nurs'd, the soothing strain
 Flow'd with enchantment through the ravish'd ear,
 Their fierceness melted, and amaz'd they learn'd
 The sacred laws of justice, which the bard
 Mix'd with the music of his heav'nly string.

Mean time th' Arcadians with inverted arms
 And banners, sad and solemn on their shields
 The giant limbs of Clonius bore along
 To spread a gen'ral woe. The noblest corse,
 Dire spectacle of carnage, passing by
 To those last honors, which the dead partake,
 Struck Dithyrambus. Swift his melted eye
 Review'd Phraortes on the rock supine;
 Then on the sage Demophilus he look'd
 Intent, and spake. 'My heart retains thy words.
 This hour may witness, how rapacious pow'r
 The earth unpeoples. Clonius is no more.
 But he, by Greece lamented, will acquire
 A signal tomb. This gallant Persian, crush'd
 Beneath my fortune, bath'd in blood, still warm,
 May lie forgotten by his thankless king;
 Yet not by me neglected shall remain
 A naked corse.' The good old man replies.

'My gen'rous child, deserving that success,
 Thy arm hath gain'd! When vital breath is fled
 Our friends, our foes are equal dust. Both claim
 The fun'ral passage to that future seat
 Of being, where no enmity revives.
 There Greek and Persian will together quaff
 In amaranthine bow'rs the cup of bliss
 Immortal. Him, thy valor slew on earth,
 In that bless'd region thou mayst find a friend.'

This said, the ready Thespians he commands
 To lift Phraortes from his bed of death,
 Th' empurpled rock. Outstretch'd on targets broad,
 Sustain'd by hands late hostile, now humane,
 He follows Clonius to the fun'ral pyre.

A cave not distant from the Phocian wall
 Through Oeta's cloven side had nature form'd
 In spacious windings. This in moss she clad;
 O'er half the entrance downward from the roots

She hung the shaggy trunks of branching firs,
 To heav'n's hot ray impervious. Near the mouth
 Relucent laurels spread before the sun
 A broad and vivid foliage. High above,
 The hill was darken'd by a solemn shade,
 Diffus'd from ancient cedars. To this cave
 Diomedon, Demophilus resort,
 And Thespia's youth. A deep recess appears,
 Cool, as the azure grot where Thetis sleeps
 Beneath the vaulted ocean. Whisper'd sounds
 Of waters, trilling from the riven stone
 To feed a fountain on the rocky floor,
 In purest streams o'erflowing to the sea,
 Allure the warriors, hot with toil and thirst
 To this retreat serene. Against the sides
 Their disencumber'd hands repose their shield's;
 The helms they loosen from their glowing cheeks;
 Propp'd on their spears, they rest; when Agis brings
 From Lacedæmon's leader these commands.

' Leonidas recalls you from your toils,
 Ye meritorious Grecians. You have reap'd
 The first bright harvest on the field of fame.
 Our eyes in wonder from the Phocian wall
 On your unequal'd deeds incessant gaz'd.'

To whom Plataea's chief. ' Go, Agis, say
 To Lacedæmon's ruler, that, untir'd,
 Diomedon can yet exalt his spear,
 Nor feels the armour heavy on his limbs.
 Shall I then quit the contest! Ere he sinks,
 Shall not this early sun again behold
 The slaves of Xerxes tremble at my lance,
 Should they adventure on a fresh assault?'

To him the Thespian youth. ' My friend, my guide
 To noble actions, since thy gen'rous heart
 Intent on fame disdains to rest, O grant,
 I too thy glorious labors may partake;

May learn once more to imitate thy deeds;
 'Thou, gentlest Agis, Sparta's king entreat
 Not to command us from the field of war.'

'Yes, persevering heroes, he reply'd,
 I will return, will Sparta's king entreat
 Not to command you from the field of war.'

Then interpos'd Demophilus. 'O friend
 Who leadst to conquest brave Plataea's sons;
 Thou too, lov'd offspring of the dearest man,
 Who dost restore a brother to my eyes;
 My soul your magnanimity applauds:
 But, O reflect, that unabating toil
 Subdues the mightiest. Valor will repine,
 When the weak hand obeys the heart no more;
 Yet I declining through the weight of years,
 Will not assign a measure to your strength.
 If still you find your vigor undecay'd,
 Stay and augment your glory. So, when time
 Casts from your whiten'd heads the helm aside;
 When in the temples your enfeebled arms
 Have hung their consecrated shields, the land
 Which gave you life, in her defence employ'd;
 Shall then by honors, doubled on your age,
 Requite the gen'rous labours of your prime.'

So spake the senior, and forsook the cave.
 But from the fount Diomedon receives
 Th' o'erflowing waters in his concave helm,
 Addressing thus the genius of the stream.

'Whoe'er thou art, divinity unstain'd
 Of this fair fountain, till unsparing Mars
 Heap'd carnage round thee, bounteous are thy streams
 To me, who ill repay thee. I again
 Thy silver-gleaming current must pollute,
 Which, mix'd with gore, shall tinge the Malian slime.'

He said, and lifted in his brimming casque
 The bright, refreshing moisture. Thus repairs
 The spotted panther to Hydaspes' side,
 Or eastern Indus, feasted on the blood
 Of some torn deer, which nigh his cruel grasp
 Had roam'd, unheeding, in the secret shade;
 Rapacious o'er the humid brink he stoops,
 And in the pure and fluid crystal cools
 His reeking jaws. Mean time the Thespian's eye
 Roves round the vaulted space; when sudden sounds
 Of music, utter'd by melodious harps,
 And melting voices, distant, but in tones
 By distance soften'd while the echoes sigh'd
 In lulling replication, fill the vault
 With harmony. In admiration mute,
 With nerves unbrac'd by rapture, he, entranc'd,
 Stands like an eagle, when his parting plumes
 The balm of sleep relaxes, and his wings
 Fall from his languid side. Plataea's chief,
 Observing, rous'd the warrior. 'Son of Mars,
 Shall music's softness from thy bosom steal
 The sense of glory? From his neighb'ring camp
 Perhaps the Persian sends fresh nations down.
 Soon in bright steel Thermopylae will blaze.
 Awake. Accustom'd to the clang of arms,
 Intent on vengeance for invaded Greece,
 My ear, my spirit in this hour admit
 No new sensation, nor a change of thought.'

The Thespian, starting from oblivious sloth
 Of ravishment and wonder, quick reply'd.

'These sounds were more, than human. Hark! Again!
 O honor'd friend, no adverse banner streams
 In sight. No shout proclaims the Persian freed
 From his late terror. Deeper let us plunge
 In this mysterious dwelling of the nymphs,
 Whose voices charm its gloom.' In smiles rejoin'd
 Diomedon. 'I see thy soul enthrall'd

Me thou wouldst rank among th' unletter'd rout
 Of yon Barbarians, should I press thy stay.
 Time favors too. Till Agis be return'd,
 We cannot act. Indulge thy eager search.
 Here will I wait, a centinel unmov'd,
 To watch thy coming.' In exploring haste
 Th' impatient Thespian penetrates the cave.
 He finds it bounded by a steep ascent
 Of rugged steps ; where down the hollow rock
 A modulation clear, distinct and slow,
 In movement solemn, from a lyric string,
 Dissolves the stagnant air to sweet accord
 With these sonorous lays. Celestial maids !
 While, from our cliffs contemplating the war,
 We celebrate our heroes, O impart
 Orphean magic to the pious strain !
 That from the mountain we may call the groves,
 Swift motion through these marble fragments breathe,
 To overleap the high Cætan ridge,
 And crush the fell invaders of our peace.

The animated hero upward springs
 Light, as a kindled vapour, which, confin'd
 In subterranean cavities, at length
 Pervading, rives the surface, to enlarge
 The long imprison'd flame. Ascending soon,
 He sees, he stands abash'd, then rev'rent kneels.

An aged temple with insculptur'd forms
 Of Jove's harmonious daughters, and a train
 Of nine bright virgins, round their priestess rang'd,
 Who stood in awful majesty, receive
 His unexpected feet. The song is hush'd.
 The measur'd movement on the lyric chord
 In faint vibration dies. The priestess sage,
 Whose elevated port and aspect rose
 To more than mortal dignity, her lyre
 Consigning graceful to attendant hands,
 Looks with reproof. The loose, uncover'd hair

Shades his inclining forehead ; while a flush
 Of modest crimson dyes his youthful cheek.
 Her pensive visage softens to a smile
 On worth so blooming, which she thus accosts—

‘ I should reprove thee, inadvertent youth,
 Who through the sole access, by nature left
 To this pure mansion, with intruding steps
 Dost interrupt our lays. But rise. Thy sword
 Perhaps embellish’d that triumphant scene,
 Which wak’d these harps to celebrating notes.
 What is the impress on thy warlike shield ?’

‘ A golden eagle on my shield I bear,’
 Still bending low, he answers. She pursues—

‘ Art thou possessor of that glorious orb,
 By me distinguish’d in the late defeat
 Of Asia, driv’n before thee ? Speak thy name.
 Who is thy sire ? Where lies thy native seat ?
 Com’st thou for glory to this fatal spot,
 Or from Barbarian violence to guard
 A parent’s age, a spouse, and tender babes,
 Who call thee father ?’ Humbly he again—

‘ I am of Thespia, Dithyrambus nam’d,
 The son of Harmatides. Snatch’d by fate,
 He to his brother, and my second sire,
 Demophilus, consign’d me. Thespia’s sons
 By him are led. His dictates I obey,
 Him to resemble strive. No infant voice
 Calls me a father. To the nuptial vow
 I am a stranger, and among the Greeks
 The least entitled to thy partial praise.’

‘ None more entitled,’ interpos’d the dame.
 ‘ Deserving hero! thy demeanor speaks,
 It justifies the fame, so widely spread,
 Of Harmatides’ heir. O grace and pride

Of that fair city, which the Muses love,
 Thence an accepted visitant I hail
 In this their ancient temple. Thou shalt view
 Their sacred haunts.' Descending from the dome,
 She thus pursues—'First know, my youthful hours
 Were exercis'd in knowledge. Homer's Muse
 To daily meditation won my soul,
 With my young spirit mix'd undying sparks
 Of her own rapture. By a father, sage,
 Conducted, cities, manners, men I saw,
 Their institutes and customs. I return'd.
 The voice of Locris call'd me to sustain
 The holy function here. Now throw thy sight
 Across that meadow, whose enliven'd blades
 Wave in the breeze, and glisten in the sun
 Behind the hoary fane. My bleating train
 Are nourish'd there, a spot of plenty, spar'd
 From this surrounding wilderness. Remark
 That fluid mirror, edg'd by shrubs and flow'rs;
 Shrubs of my culture, flow'rs, by Iris dress'd.
 Nor pass that smiling concave in the hill,
 Whose pointed craggs are soften'd to the sight
 By figs and grapes.' She pauses; while around
 His eye, delighted, groves, in more delight
 Soon to the spot returning, where she stood
 A deity in semblance, o'er the place
 Presiding awful, as Minerva wise,
 August like Juno, like Diana pure,
 But not more pure, than fair. The beauteous lake,
 The pines wide-branching, falls of water clear,
 The multifarious glow on Flora's lap
 Lose all attraction, as her gracious lips
 Resume their tale. 'In solitude remote
 Here I have dwelt contemplative, serene.
 Oft through the rocks responsive to my lyre,
 Oft to th' Amphictyons in assembly full.
 When at this shrine their annual vows they pay,
 In measur'd declamation I repeat
 The praise of Greece, her liberty and laws.
 From me the hinds, who tend their wand'ring goats

In these rude purlieus, modulate their pipes
 To smother cadence. Justice from my tongue
 Dessention calms, which ev'n in deserts rend
 The unquiet heart of man. Now furious war
 My careful thoughts engages, which delight
 To help the free, th' oppressor to confound.
 Thy feet auspicious fortune thither brings.
 In thee a noble messenger I find.
 Go, in these words Leonidas address.
 'Melissa, priestess of the tuneful nine,
 By their behests invites thy honor'd feet
 To her divine abode. Thee, first of Greeks,
 To conference of high import she calls.'

Th' obedient Thespian down the holy cave
 Returns. His swiftness suddenly prevents
 His friend's impatience, who salutes him thus—

'Let thy adventure be hereafter told.
 Look yonder. Fresh battalions from the camp
 File through the Phocian barrier to construct
 Another phalanx, moving tow'r of war,
 Which scorns the strength of Asia. Let us arm;
 That, ready station'd in the glorious van,
 We may secure permission from the king
 There to continue, and renew the fight.'

That instant brings Megistias near the grot.
 To Sparta's phalanx his paternal hand
 Was leading Menalippus. Not unheard
 By Dithyrambus in their slow approach,
 The father warns a young and lib'ral mind.

'Sprung from a distant boundary of Greece,
 A foreigner in Sparta, cherish'd there,
 Instructed, honor'd, nor unworthy held
 To fight for Lacedæmon, in her line
 Of discipline and valor, lo! my son,
 The hour is come to prove thy gen'rous heart.'

That in thy hand, not ill-entrusted, shine
 The spear and buckler to maintain the cause
 Of thy protectress. Let thy mind recall
 Leonidas. On yonder bulwark plac'd,
 He overlooks the battle; he discerns
 The bold and fearful. May the gods, I serve,
 Grant me to hear Leonidas approve.
 My son! No other boon my age implores.'

The augur paus'd. The animated cheek
 Of Menalippus glows. His eager look
 Demands the fight. This struck the tender sire,
 Who then with moisten'd eyes. Remember too,
 A father sees thy danger. Oh! my child,
 To me thy honor, as to thee, is dear;
 Yet court not death. By ev'ry filial tie,
 By all my fondness, all my cares I sue!
 Amid the conflict, or the warm pursuit
 Still by the wise Dienees abide.
 His prudent valor knows th' unerring paths
 Of glory. He admits thee to his side.
 He will direct thy ardour. Go'—They part.

Megistias, turning, is accosted thus
 By Dithyrambus—'Venerable seer,
 So may that son, whose merit I esteem,
 Whose precious head in peril I would die
 To guard, return in triumph to thy breast,
 As thou deliver'st to Laconia's king
 A high and solemn message. While anew
 The line is forming, from th' embattled field
 I must not stray, uncall'd. A sacred charge
 Through hallow'd lips will best approach the king.'

The Acar'nanian in suspense remains
 And silence. Dithyrambus quick relates
 Melissa's words, describes the holy grot,
 Then quits th' instructed augur, and attends
 Diomedon's loud call. That fervid chief

Was reassuming his distinguish'd arms,
 Which, as a splendid recompense, he bore
 From grateful Athens, for achievements bold;
 When he with brave Miltiades redeem'd
 Her domes from Asian flames. The sculptur'd helm
 Inclos'd his manly temples. From on high
 A four-fold plumage nodded; while beneath
 A golden dragon with effulgent scales,
 Itself the crest, shot terror. On his arm
 He brac'd his buckler. Bord'ring on the rim,
 Gorgonian serpents twin'd. Within, the form
 Of Pallas, martial goddess, was emboss'd.
 Low, as her feet, the graceful tunic flow'd.
 Betwixt two gryffins on her helmet sat
 A sphynx with wings expanded; while the face
 Of dire Medusa on her breastplate frown'd.
 One hand supports a javelin, which confounds
 The pride of kings. The other leads along
 A blooming virgin, Victory, whose brow
 A wreath encircles. Laurels she presents;
 But from her shoulders all her plumes were shorn,
 In favor'd Athens ever now to rest.
 This dread of Asia on his mighty arm
 Diomedon uprear'd. He snatch'd his lance,
 Then spake to Dithyrambus. 'See, my friend,
 Alone of all the Grecians, who sustain'd
 The former onset, inexhausted stand
 Plataea's sons. They well may keep the field,
 Who with unslacken'd nerves endur'd that day,
 Which saw ten myriads of Barbarians driv'n
 Back to their ships, and Athens left secure.
 Charge in our line. Amid the foremost rank
 Thy valour shall be plac'd to share command,
 And ev'ry honor with Plataea's chief.'

He said no more, but tow'rd's the Grecian van
 Impetuous, ardent strode. Now slow behind
 The pride of Thespia, Dithyrambus mov'd
 Like youthful Hermes in celestial arms;

When lightly graceful with his feather'd feet
 Along Scamander's flow'ry verge he pass'd
 To aid th' incens'd divinities of Greece
 Against the Phrygian tow'rs. Their eager haste
 Soon brings the heroes to th' embattling ranks,
 Whom thus the brave Diomedon exhorts.

'Not to contend, but vanquish are ye come.
 Here in the blood of fugitives your spears
 Shall, unoppos'd, be stain'd. My valiant friends,
 But chief, ye men of Sparta, view that space,
 Where from the Malian gulph more distant rise
 Th' Ætæan rocks, and less confine the straits.
 There if we range, extending wide our front,
 An ampler scope to havoc will be giv'n.'

To him Dienece—'Platæan friend,
 Well dost thou counsel. On that widening ground
 Close to the mountain place thy vet'ran files.
 Proportion'd numbers from thy right shall stretch
 Quite to the shore in phalanx deep like thine.
 The Spartans wedg'd in this contracted part
 Will I contain. Behind me Alpheus waits
 With lighter bodies. Further back the line
 Of Loeris forms a strong reserve.' He said.
 The diff'rent bands, confiding in his skill,
 Move on successive. The Platæans first
 Against the hill are station'd. In their van
 Is Dithyrambus rank'd. Triumphant joy
 Distends their bosoms, sparkles in their eyes.

Bless'd be the great Diomedon, they shout,
 Who brings another hero to our line.
 Hail! Dithyrambus, Hail! illustrious youth.
 Had tender age permitted, thou hadst gain'd
 An early palm at Marathon. His post
 He takes. His gladness blushes on his cheek
 Amid the foremost rank. Around him croud
 The long-try'd warriors. Their unnumber'd scars

Discovering; they in ample phrase recount
 Their various dangers. He their wounds surveys
 In veneration, nor disdains to hear
 The oft-repeated tale. From Sparta's king
 Return'd, the gracious Agis these address'd—

‘Leonidas salutes Plataea's chief
 And Dithyrambus. To your swords he grants
 A further effort with Plataea's band,
 If yet by toil unconquer'd—but I see,
 That all, unyielding, court the promis'd fight.
 Hail! glorious veterans. This signal day
 May your victorious arms augment the wreaths
 Around your venerable heads, and grace
 Thermopylae with Marathonian fame.’

This said, he hastens back. Mean time advance
 The Mantinean, Diophantus brave,
 Then Hegesander, Tegea's dauntless chief,
 Who near Diomedon in equal range
 Erect their standards. Next the Thebans form
 Alemæon, bold Eupalamus succeed
 With their Corinthian and Phliasian bands.
 Last on the Malian shore Mycenæ's youth
 Aristobulus draws. From Ceta's side
 Down to the bay in well-connected length
 Each gleaming rank contains a hundred spears,
 While twenty bucklers ev'ry file condense.
 A sure support, Dieneces behind
 Arrays the Spartans. Godlike Agis here,
 There Menalippus by their leader stand
 Two bulwarks. Breathing ardour in the rear;
 The words of Alpheus fan the growing flame
 Of expectation through his light-arm'd force;
 While Polydorus present in his thoughts
 To vengeance sharpens his indignant soul.

No foe is seen. No distant shout is heard.
 This pause of action Dithyrambus chose.

The solemn scene on Cæta to his friend
 He open'd large; portray'd Melissa's form,
 Reveal'd her mandate; when Plataea's chief—

'Such elevation of a female mind
 Bespeaks Melissa worthy to obtain
 The conference, she asks. This wond'rous dame
 Amid her hymns conceives some lofty thought
 To make the slaves, who loiter in their camp,
 Dread ev'n our women. But, my gentle friend,
 Say, Dithyrambus, whom the liquid spell
 Of song enchants, should I reproach the gods,
 Who form'd me cold to music's pleasing pow'r?
 Or should I thank them, that the soft'ning charm
 Of sound, or numbers ne'er dissolv'd my soul?
 Yet I confess, thy valor breaks that charm,
 Which may enrapture, not human thy breast.'

To whom his friend—'Doth he, whose lays record
 The woes of Priam and the Grecian fame,
 Doth he dissolve thy spirit? Yet he flows
 In all the sweetness, harmony can breathe.'

'No by the gods,' Diomedon rejoins.
 'I feel that mighty muse. I see the car
 Of fierce Achilles, see th'encumber'd wheels
 O'er heroes driv'n, and clotted with their gore.
 Another too demands my soul's esteem,
 Brave Æschylus of Athens. I have seen
 His muse begirt by Furies, while she swell'd
 Her tragic numbers. Him in equal rage
 His country's foes o'whelming I beheld
 At Marathon. If Phœbus would diffuse
 Such fire through ev'ry bard, the tuneful band
 Might in themselves find heroes for their songs.
 But, son of Hermatides, lift thine eye
 To yonder point, remotest in the bay.
 Those seeming clouds, which o'er the billows fleet
 Successive round the jutting land, are sails.'

'Th' Athenian pendant hastens to salute
Leonidas. O Æschylus, my friend,
First in the train of Phœbus, and of Mars,
Be thou on board ! Swift-bounding o'er the waves,
Come and be witness to heroic deeds!
Brace thy strong harp with loftier-sounding chords
To celebrate this battle! Fall, who may;
But if they fall with honor, let their names
Round festive goblets in thy numbers ring,
And joy, not grief, accompany the song.'

Conversing thus, their courage they beguil'd;
Which else impatient of inactive hours
At long-suspended glory had repin'd.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK VII.

ARGUMENT.

Megistias delivers Melissa's message to Leonidas. Mar-
don, her brother, conducts him to the Temple. She
furnishes Leonidas with the means of executing a
design, he had premeditated to annoy the enemy.
They are joined by a body of mariners under the
command of Æschylus, a celebrated poet and war-
rior among the Athenians. Leonidas takes the ne-
cessary measures; and, observing from a summit of
Oeta the motions of the Persian army, expects ano-
ther attack: this is renewed with great violence by
Hyperanthes, Abrocomes, and the principal Persian
leaders at the head of some chosen troops.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK VII.

MEGISTIAS, urging to unwonted speed
His aged steps, by Dithyrambus charg'd
With sage Melissa's words, had now rejoin'd
The king of Lacedæmon. At his side
Was Maron posted, watchful to receive
His high injunctions. In the rear they stood
Behind two thousand Locrians, deep-array'd
By warlike Medon, from Oileus sprung.
Leonidas to them his anxious mind
Was thus disclosing--'Medon, Maron, hear.
From this low rampart my exploring eye
But half commands the action, yet hath mark'd
Enough for caution. Yon barbarian camp,
Immense, exhaustless, deluging the ground
With myriads, still o'erflowing, may consume
By endless numbers, and unceasing toil
The Grecian strength. Not marble is our flesh,
Nor adamant our sinews. Sylvan pow'rs,
Who dwell on Oeta, your superior aid
We must solicit. Your stupendous cliffs
In those close rocks, and branchless trunks contain
More fell annoyance, than the arm of man.'

He ended; when Megistias. 'Virtuous king,
Melissa, priestess of the tuneful nine,
By their behests invites thy honor'd feet
To her chaste dwelling' seated on that hill
To conference of high import she calls
'Thee, first of Grecians.' Medon interpos'd;

'She is my sister. Justice rules her ways
With piety and wisdom. To her voice

The nations round give ear. The muses breathe
 Their inspiration through her spotless soul,
 Which borders on divinity. She calls
 On thee. O truly styl'd the first of Greeks,
 Regard her call. Yon cliff's projecting head
 To thy discernment will afford a scope
 More full, more certain; thence thy skilful eye
 Will best direct the fight, Melissa's sire
 Was ever present to the king in thought,
 Who thus to Medon. 'Lead Oileus' son.
 Before the daughter of Oileus place
 My willing feet.' They hasten to the cave.
 Megistias, Maron follow. Through the rock
 Leonidas, ascending to the fane,
 Rose like the god of morning from the cell
 Of night, when, shedding cheerfulness and day
 On hill and vale emblaz'd with dewy gems,
 He gladdens nature. Lacedæmon's king,
 Majestically graceful and serene,
 Dispels the rigour in that solemn seat
 Of holy sequestration. On the face
 Of pensive-ey'd religion rapture glows
 In admiration of the god-like man.
 Advanc'd Melissa. He her proffer'd hand,
 In hue, in purity, like snow, receiv'd.
 A heav'n-illumin'd dignity of look
 On him she fix'd. Rever'd by all, she spake.

Hail! chief of men, selected by the gods
 For purer fame than Hercules acquir'd.
 This hour allows no pause. She leads the king
 With Medon, Maron, and Megistias down
 A slope, declining to the mossy verge,
 Which terminates the mountain. While they pass,
 She thus proceeds. These marble masses view,
 Which lie dispers'd around you. They were hewn
 From yonder quarry. Note those pond'rous beams,
 The silvan offspring of that hill. With these
 At my request th' Amphictyons from their seat

Of gen'ral council piously decreed
 To raise a dome, the ornament of Greece.
 Observe those wither'd firs, those mould'ring oaks,
 Down that declivity, half-rooted, bent,
 Inviting human force——Then look below.
 'There lies Thermopylæ.' 'I see, exclaims
 The high-conceiving hero. I recall
 Thy father's words and forecast. He presag'd,
 I should not find his daughter's counsel vain.
 He to accomplish what thy wisdom plans,
 Hath amplest means supply'd. Go, Medon, bring
 The thousand peasants from th' Oilean vale
 Detach'd. Their leader Meliboeus bring.
 Fly, Maron. Ev'ry instrument provide
 To fell the trees, to drag the massy beams,
 To lift the broad-hewn fragments.' 'Are not these
 For sacred use reserv'd, Megistias said?
 Can these be wielded by the hand of Mars
 Without pollution?' In a solemn tone
 The priestess answer'd. 'Reverend man, who bear'st
 Pontific wreaths, and thou, great captain, hear.
 Forbear to think, that my unprompted mind,
 Calm and sequester'd in religion's peace,
 Could have devis'd a stratagem of war;
 Or, unpermitted, could resign to Mars
 These rich materials, gather'd to restore
 In strength and splendor yon decrepid walls,
 And that time-shaken roof. Rejecting sleep,
 Last night I lay, contriving swift revenge
 On these Barbarians, whose career profane
 O'erturns the Grecian temples, and devotes
 Their holy bow'rs to flames. I left my couch,
 Long ere the sun his orient gates unbarr'd.
 Beneath yon beach my pensive head reelin'd.
 The rivulets, the fountains, warbling round,
 Attracted slumber. In a dream I saw
 Calliope. Her sisters, all with harps,
 Were rang'd around her; as their Parian forms
 Shew in the temple. Dost thou sleep, she said?

Melissa, dost thou sleep? The barb'rous host
 Approaches Greece. The first of Grecians comes
 By death to vanquish. Priestess, let him hurl
 These marble heaps, these consecrated beams,
 Our fane itself, to crush the impious ranks.
 The hero summon to our sacred hill.
 Reveal the promis'd succour. All is due
 To liberty against a tyrant's pride.
 She struck her shell. In concert full reply'd
 The sister lyres. Leonidas they sung
 In ev'ry note and dialect yet known,
 In measures new, in language yet to come.'

She finish'd. Then Megistias. 'Dear to heav'n
 By nations honor'd, and in tow'ring thought
 O'er either sex pre-eminent, thy words
 To me a soldier and a priest suffice.
 I hesitate no longer.' But the king,
 Wrapt in extatic contemplation stood,
 Revolving deep an answer, which might suit
 His dignity and hers. At length he spake—

'Not Lacedæmon's whole collected state
 Of senate, people, ephori and kings,
 Not the Amphictyons, whose convention holds
 The universal majesty of Greece,
 E'er drew such rev'rence, as thy single form,
 O all-surpassing woman, worthy child
 Of time-renown'd Oileus. In thy voice
 I hear the goddess liberty. I see
 In thy sublimity of look and port
 That daughter bright of Eleutherian Jove.
 Me thou hast prais'd. My conscious spirit feels,
 That not to triumph in thy virtuous praise
 Were want of virtue. Yet, illustrious dame,
 Were I assur'd, that oracles delude;
 That, unavailing, I should spill my blood;
 That all the Muses of subjected Greece
 Hereafter would be silent, and my name

Be ne'er transmitted to recording time;
 There is in virtue for her sake alone,
 What should uphold my resolution firm.
 My country's laws I never would survive.'

 Mov'd at his words, reflecting on his fate,
 She had relax'd her dignity of mind,
 Had sunk in sadness; but her brother's helm
 Before her beams. Relumining her night,
 He through the cave like Hesperus ascends,
 Th' Oilean hinds conducting to achieve
 The enterprise, she counsels. Now her ear
 Is pierc'd by notes, shrill sounding from the vault.
 Upstarts a diff'rent band, alert and light,
 Athenian sailors. Long and sep'rate files
 Of lusty shoulders, eas'd by union, bear
 Thick, well-compacted cables, wont to heave
 The restiff anchor. 'To a naval pipe,
 As if one soul invigorated all,
 And all compos'd one body, they had trod
 In equal paces, mazy, yet unbroke
 Throughout their passage. So the spinal strength
 Of some portentous serpent, whom the heats
 Of Libya breed, indissolubly knit,
 But flexible, a-cross the sandy plain,
 Or up the mountain draws his spotted length,
 Or where a winding excavation leads
 Through rocks abrupt and wild. Of stature large,
 In arms, which shew'd simplicity of strength,
 No decoration of redundant art,
 With sable horse-hair, floating down his back,
 A warrior moves behind. Compos'd in gait,
 Austerely grave and thoughtful, on his shield
 The democratic majesty he bore
 Of Athens. Carv'd in emblematic brass,
 Her image stood with Pallas by her side,
 And trampled under each victorious foot
 A regal crown, one Persin, one usurpt
 By her own tyrants, on the well-fought plain

Of Marathon confounded. He commands
 These future guardians of their country's weal,
 Of gen'ral Greece the bulwarks. Their high deeds,
 From Artemisium, from th' empurpled shores
 Of Salamis, renown shall echo wide;
 Shall tell posterity in latest times,
 That naval fortitude controuls the world.
 Swift Maron, following, brings a vig'rous band
 Of Helots. Ev'ry instrument they wield
 To delve, to hew, to heave; and active last
 Bounds Melibœus, vigilant to urge
 The tardy forward. To Laconia's king
 Advanc'd th' Athenian leader, and began—

'Thou godlike ruler of Eurotas, hail!
 Thee by my voice Themistocles salutes,
 The admiral of Athens. I conduct
 By public choice the squadron of my tribe,
 And Æschylus am call'd. Our chief hath giv'n
 Three days to glory on Eubœa's coast,
 Whose promontories almost rise to meet
 Thy ken from Oeta's cliffs. This morning saw
 The worsted foe, from Artemisium driv'n,
 Leave their disabled ships, and floating wrecks
 For Grecian trophies. When the fight was clos'd
 I was detach'd to bring th' auspicious news,
 To bid thee welcome. Fortunate my keel
 Hath swiftly borne me. Joyful I concur
 In thy attempt. Appris'd by yonder chiefs,
 Who met me landing, instant from the ships
 A thousand gallant mariners I drew,
 Who till the setting sun shall lend their toil.'

'Themistocles and thou accept my heart,'
 Leonidas reply'd, and closely strain'd
 The brave, the learn'd Athenian to his breast.
 'To envy is ignoble, to admire
 Th' activity of Athens will become
 A king of Sparta, who like thee condemn'd

His country's sloth. But Sparta now is arm'd.
 Thou shalt command. Behold me station'd here
 To watch the wild vicissitudes of war,
 Direct the course of slaughter. To this post
 By that superior woman I was call'd.
 By long protracted fight lest fainting Greece
 Should yield, outnumber'd, my enlighten'd soul
 Through her, whom heav'n enlightens, hath devis'd
 To whelm the num'rous persevering foe
 In hideous death, and signalize the day
 With horrors new to war. The Muses prompt
 The bright achievement. Lo! from Athens smiles
 Minerva too. Her swift, auspicious aid
 In thee we find, and these, an ancient race,
 By her and Neptune cherish'd.' Straight he meets
 The gallant train, majestic with his arms
 Outstretch'd, in this applauding strain he spake—

'O lib'ral people, earliest arm'd to shield
 Not your own Athens more, than gen'ral Greece,
 You best deserve her gratitude. Her praise
 Will rank you foremost on the rolls of fame.'

They hear, they gaze, revering and rever'd.
 Fresh numbers muster rushing from the hills,
 The thickets round. Melissa, pointing, spake.

'I am their leader. Natives of the hills
 Are these, the rural worshippers of Pan,
 Who breathes an ardour through their humble minds
 To join you warriors. Vassals these, not mine,
 But of the Muses, and their hallow'd laws,
 Administer'd by me. Their patient hands
 Make culture smile, where nature seems to chide;
 Nor wanting my instructions, or my pray'rs,
 Fertility they scatter by their toil
 Around this aged temple's wild domain:
 Is Melibœus here! Thou fence secure
 To old Oileus from the cares of time.

Thrice art thou welcome. Useful, wise, belov'd,
 Where'er thou sojournest, on Oeta known,
 As oft the bounty of a father's love
 Thou on Melissa's solitude dost pour,
 Be thou director of these mountain hinds.'

Th' important labour to inspiring airs
 From flutes and harps in symphony with hymns
 Of holy virgins, ardent all perform,
 In bands divided under diff'rent chiefs.
 Huge timbers, blocks of marble to remove
 They first attempted; then assembled stones
 Loose in their beds, and wither'd trunks, upturn
 By tempests; next dismember'd from the rock
 Broad, rugged fragments; from the mountains hew'd
 Their venerable firs, and aged oaks,
 Which, of their branches by the light'ning bar'd,
 Presented still against the blasting flame
 Their hoary pride unshaken. These the Greeks,
 But chief th' Athenian mariners, to force
 Uniting skill, with massy leavers heave,
 With strong-knit cables drag: till, now dispos'd,
 Where great Leonidas appoints, the piles
 Nod o'er the Straits. This new and sudden scene
 Might lift imagination to belief,
 That Orpheus and Amphion from their beds
 Of ever blooming asphodel had heard
 The Muses call; had brought their fabled harps
 At whose mellifluent charm once more the trees
 Had burst their fibrous bands, and marbles leap'd
 In rapid motion from the quarry's womb,
 That day to follow harmony in aid
 Of gen'rous valor. Fancy might discern
 Cerulean Tethys, from her coral grot
 Emerging, seated on her pearly car,
 With Nereids, floating on the surge below,
 To view in wonder from the Malian bay
 The Attic sons of Neptune; who forsook

Their wooden walls to range th' Oetcean crags,
To rend the forests, and disjoin the rock.

Meantime a hundred sheep are slain. Their limbs
From burning piles fume grateful. Bounty spreads
A decent board, Simplicity attends.
Then spake the priestess—'Long-enduring chiefs,
Your efforts now accomplish'd, may admit
Refection due to this hard-labour'd train,
Due to yourselves, Her hospitable smile
Wins her well-chosen guests, Laconia's king,
Her brother, Maron, Æschylus divine
With Acarnania's priest. Her first commands
To Melibœus sedulous and blithe
Distribute plenty through the toiling croud.
Then, skreen'd beneath close umbrage of an oak,
Each care-divested chief the banquet shares.'

Cool breezes, whisp'ring, flutter in the leaves,
Whose verdure, pendent in an arch, repel
The west'ring sun's hot glare. Favonius bland
His breath impregnates with exhaling sweets
From flow'ry beds, whose scented clusters deck
The gleaming pool in view. Fast by, a brook
In limpid lapses over native steps
Attunes his cadence to sonorous strings,
And liquid accents of Melissa's maids.
The floating air in melody respire.
A rapture mingles in the calm repast.
Up rises Æschylus. A goblet full
He grasps. 'To those divinities, who dwell
In yonder temple, this libation first,
To thee, benignant hostess, next I pour,
'Then to thy fame, Leonidas.' He said.
His breast, with growing heat distended, prompts
His eager hand, to whose expressive sign
One of the virgins cedes her sacred lyre.
Their choral song complacency restrains.
The soul of music, bursting from his touch,
At once gives birth to sentiment sublime.

'O Hērēulēs, and Perseus,' he began,
 'Star-spangled twins of Leda, and the rest
 Of Jove's immediate seed, your splendid acts
 Mankind protected, while the race was rude;
 While o'er the earth's unciviliz'd extent
 The savage monster, and the ruffian sway'd;
 More savage still. No policy, nor laws
 Had fram'd societies. By single strength
 A single ruffian, or a monster fell.
 'The legislator rose. Three lights in Greece,
 Lyeurgus, Solon and Zaleucus blaz'd.
 'Then, substituting wisdom, Jove profuse
 Of his own blood no longer, gave us more
 In discipline and manners, which can form
 A hero like Leonidas, than all
 'The god-begotten progeny before.
 'The pupils next of Solon claim the muse.
 Sound your hoarse conchs, ye Tritons. You beheld
 'The Atlantean shape of slaughter wade
 'Through your astonish'd deeps, his purple arm
 Uplifting high before th' Athenian line.
 You saw bright conquest, riding on the gale,
 Which swell'd their sails; saw terror at their helms
 'To guide their brazen beaks on Asia's pride.
 Her adamant grapple from their decks
 Fate threw, and ruin on the hostile fleet
 Inextricably fasten'd. Sound, ye nymphs
 Of Oeta's mountains, of her woods and streams;
 Who hourly witness to Melissa's worth,
 Ye Oreads, Dryads, Naiads, sound her praise.
 Proclaim Zaleucus by his daughter grac'd
 Like Solon and Lyeurgus by their sons.'

Laconia's hero, and the priestess bow'd
 Their foreheads grateful to the bard sublime.
 She, rising, takes the word. 'More sweet thy lyre
 To friendship's ear, than terrible to foes
 'Thy spear in battle, though the keenest point,
 Which ever pierc'd Barbarians, Close we here

The song and banquet. Hark! a distant din—
From Asia's camp requires immediate care.'

She leads. Along the rocky verge they pass.
In calm delight Leonidas surveys
All in the order, which he last assign'd;
As o'er Thermopylæ beneath he cast
A wary look. 'The mountain's farthest crag
Now reach'd, Melissa to the king began—

'Observe that space below, dispers'd in dales,
In hollows, winding through dissever'd rocks.
The slender outlet, skreen'd by yonder shrubs,
Leads to the pass. There stately to my view
The martial queen of Caria yester sun,
Descending, shew'd. Her loudly I reprov'd.
But she, devoted to the Persian king,
In ambush there preserv'd his flying host.
She last retreated; but, retreating, prov'd
Her valor equal to a better cause.
Again I see the heroine approach.'

Megistias then—'I see a powerful arm,
Sustaining firm the large, emblazon'd shield,
Which, fashion'd first in Caria, we have learn'd
To imitate in Greece. Sublime her port
Bespeaks a mighty spirit. Priestess, look.
An act of piety she now performs,
Directing those, perhaps her Carian band,
To bear dead brethren from the bloody field.
Among the horsemen an exalted form
Like Demaratus strikes my searching eye.
To me, recalling his transcendent rank
In Sparta once, he seems a languid sun,
Which dimly sinks in exhalations dark,
Enveloping his radiance.' While he spake,
Intent on martial duty Medon views
The dang'rous thicket; Lacedæmon's chief,
Around the region his consid'rate eye

Extending, marks each movement of the foe.

Th' imperial Persian from his lofty car
 Had in the morning's early conflict seen
 His vanquish'd army, pouring from the straits
 Back to their tents, and o'er his camp dispers'd
 In consternation; as a river bursts
 Impetuous from his fountain, then, enlarg'd,
 Spreads a dead surface o'er some level marsh.
 Th' astonish'd king thrice started from his seat;
 Shame, fear and indignation rent his breast;
 As ruin irresistible were near
 To overwhelm his millions. 'Haste,' he call'd
 'To Hyperanthes, 'haste and meet the Greeks.
 'Their daring rage, their insolence repel.
 'From such dishonor vindicate our name.'

His royal brother through th' extensive camp
 Obedient mov'd. Deliberate and brave,
 Each active prince from ev'ry tent remote,
 The hardiest troops he summon'd. Caria's queen,
 To Hyperanthes bound by firm esteem
 Of worth, unrivall'd in the Persian court,
 In solemn pace was now returning slow
 Before a band, transporting from the field
 Their slain companions to the sandy beach.

She stopp'd, and thus address'd him—'Learn, O prince,
 From one, whose wishes on thy merit wait,
 The only means to bind thy gallant brow
 In fairest wreaths. To break the Grecian line
 In vain ye struggle, unarray'd and lax,
 Depriv'd of union. Try to form one band
 In order'd ranks, and emulate the foe.
 Nor to secure a thicket next the pass
 Forget. Selected numbers station there.
 Farewell, young hero. May thy fortune prove
 Unlike to mine. Had Asia's millions spar'd
 One myriad to sustain me, none had seen
 Me quit the dang'rous contest. But the head
 Of base Argestes on some future day

Shall feel my treasur'd vengeance. From the fleet
 I only stay, till burial rites are paid
 To these dead Carians. On this fatal strand
 May Artemisia's grief appease your ghosts,
 My faithful subjects, sacrific'd in vain.'

The hero grateful and respectful heard,
 What soon his warmth neglected at the sight
 Of spears, which flam'd innumerable round.
 Beyond the rest in lustre was a band,
 The satellites of Xerxes. They forsook
 Their constant orbit round th' imperial throne
 At this dread crisis. To a myriad fix'd,
 From their unchanging number they deriv'd
 The title of immortals. Light their spears;
 Set in pomegranates of refulgent gold,
 Or burnish'd silver, were the slender blades,
 Magnificent and stately were the ranks.
 The prince, commanding mute attention, spake—

'In two divisions part your number, chiefs.
 One will I lead to onset. In my ranks
 Abrocomes, Hydarnes shall advance,
 Pandates, Mindus, Intaphernes brave
 To wrest this short-liv'd victory from Greece.
 Thou Abradates, by Sosarnes join'd,
 Orontes and Mazæus, keep the rest
 From action. Future succour they must lend,
 Should envious fate exhaust our num'rous files.
 For, O pure Mithra, may thy radiant eye
 Ne'er see us, yielding to ignoble flight,
 The Persian name dishonor. May the acts
 Of our renown'd progenitors, who, led
 By Cyrus, gave one monarch to the east,
 In us revive. O think, ye Persian lords,
 What endless infamy will blast your names;
 Should Greece, that narrow portion of the earth,
 Your pow'r defy: when Babylon hath low'rd
 Her tow'ring crest; when Lydia's pride is quell'd

In Cræsus vanquish'd, when her empire lost
 Ecbatana deplores. Ye chosen guard,
 Your king's immortal bulwark, O reflect,
 What deeds from your superior swords he claims.
 You share his largest bounty. To your faith,
 Your constancy and prowess he commits
 His throne, his person, and this day his fame.

They wave their banners, blazing in the sun,
 Who then three hours tow'rd Hesperus had driv'n
 From his meridian height. Amid their shouts
 The hoarse-resounding billows are not heard.
 Of diff'rent nations, and in diff'rent garb,
 Innumerable and vary'd like the shells,
 By restless Tethys scatter'd on the beach,
 O'er which they trod, the multitude advanc'd,
 Straight by Leonidas descry'd. The van
 Abrocomes and Hyperanthes led,
 Pandates, Mindus. Violent their march
 Sweeps down the rocky, hollow-sounding pass.
 So, where the unequal globe in mountains swells
 A torrent rolls his thund'ring surge between
 The steep erected cliffs; tumultuous dash
 The waters, bursting on the pointed crags:
 The valley roars; the marble channel foams.
 Th' undaunted Greeks immoveably withstand
 The dire encounter. Soon th' impetuous shock
 Of thousands and of myriads shakes the ground.
 Stupendous scene of terror! Under hills,
 Whose sides, half-arching, o'er the hosts project,
 The unabating fortitude of Greece
 Maintains her line, th' untrain'd Barbarians charge
 In savage fury. With inverted trunks,
 Or bent obliquely from the shagged ridge,
 The silvan horrors overshadow the fight.
 The clanging trump, the crash of mingled spears,
 The groan of death, and war's discordant shouts
 Alarm the echoes in their neighb'ring caves;
 Woods, cliffs and shores return the dreadful sounds.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK VIII.

ARGUMENT.

Hyperanthes, discontinuing the fight, while he waits for re-enforcements, Teribazus, a Persian remarkable for his merit and learning, and highly beloved by Hyperanthes, but unhappy in his passion for Ariana, a daughter of Darius, advances from the rest of the army to the rescue of a friend in distress, who lay wounded on the field of battle. Teribazus is attacked by Diophantus, the Mantinean, whom he overcomes; then engaging with Dithyrambus, is himself slain. Hyperanthes hastens to his succour. A general battle ensues, where Diomedon distinguishes his valour. Hyperanthes and Abrocomes, partly by their own efforts, and partly by the perfidy of the Thebans, who desert the line, being on the point of forcing the Grecians, are repulsed by the Lacedæmonians. Hyperanthes composes a select body out of the Persian standing forces, and, making an improvement in their discipline, renews the attack; upon which Leonidas changes the disposition of his army: Hyperanthes and the ablest Persian generals are driven out of the field, and several thousands of the barbarians, circumvented in the pass, are entirely destroyed.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK VIII.

AMID the van of Persia was a youth,
Nam'd Teribazus, not for golden stores,
Not for wide pastures, travers'd o'er by herds,
By fleece-abounding sheep, or gen'rous steeds,
Nor yet for pow'r, nor splendid honors fam'd.
Rich was his mind in ev'ry art divine;
'Through ev'ry path of science had he walk'd,
'The votary of wisdom. In the years,
When tender down invests the ruddy cheek,
He with the Magi turn'd the hallow'd page
Of Zoroastres. Then his tow'ring thoughts
High on the plumes of contemplation soar'd.
He from the lofty Babylonian fane
With learn'd Chaldaeans trac'd the heav'nly sphere,
There numbers o'er the vivid fires, which gleam
On night's bespangled bosom. Nor unheard
Were Indian sages from sequester'd bow'rs,
While on the banks of Ganges they disclos'd
The pow'rs of nature, whether in the woods,
The fruitful glebe, or flow'r, the healing plant,
The limpid waters, or the ambient air,
Or in the purer element of fire.
The realm of old Sesostris next he view'd,
Mysterious Ægypt with her hidden rites
Of Isis and Osiris. Last he sought
Th' Ionian Greeks, from Athens sprung, nor pass'd
Miletus by, which once in rapture heard
The tongue of Thales, nor Priene's walls,
Where wisdom dwelt with Bias, nor the seat
Of Pittacus rever'd on Lesbian shores.

Th' enlightened youth to Susa now return'd,
Place of his birth. His merit soon was dear

To Hyperanthes. It was now the time,
 That discontent and murmur on the banks
 Of Nile were loud and threat'ning. Chembes there
 Thea only faithful stood, a potent lord,
 Whom Xerxes held by promis'd nuptial ties
 With his own blood. To this Ægyptian prince
 Bright Ariana was the destin'd spouse,
 From the same bed with ypHeranthes born.
 Among her guards was Terizabus nam'd
 By that fond brother, tender of her weal.

Th' Ægyptian boundaries they gain. They hear
 Of insurrection, of the Pharian tribes
 In arms, and Chembes in the tumult slain.
 They pitch their tents, at midnight are assail'd,
 Surpris'd, their leaders massacred, the slaves
 Of Ariana captives borne away,
 Her own pavilion forc'd, her person seiz'd
 By ruffian hands: when timely to redeem
 Her and th' invaded camp from further spoil.
 Flies Terizabus with a rally'd band,
 Swift on her chariot seats the royal fair,
 Nor waits the dawn. Of all her menial train
 None, but three female slaves are left. Her guide,
 Her comforter and guardian, fate provides
 In him, distinguish'd by his worth alone,
 No prince, nor satrap now the single chief
 Of her surviving guard. Of regal birth,
 But with excelling graces in her soul,
 Unlike an eastern princess she inclines
 To his consoling, his instructive tongue
 An humbled ear. Amid the converse sweet
 Her charms, her mind, her virtues he explores,
 Admiring. Soon is admiration chang'd
 To love; nor loves he sooner, than despairs.
 From morn to e'n her passing wheels he guards
 Back to Euphrates. Often, as she mounts,
 Or quits the car, his arm her weight sustains
 With trembling pleasure. His assiduous hand

From purest fountains wafts the living flood,
 Nor seldom by the fair one's soft command
 Would he repose him, at her feet reclin'd;
 While o'er his lips her lovely forehead bow'd,
 Won by his grateful eloquence, which sooth'd
 With sweet variety the tedious march,
 Beguiling time. He too would then forget
 His pains awhile, in raptures vain entranc'd,
 Delusion all, and fleeting rays of joy,
 Soon overcast by more intense despair;
 Like wintry clouds, which, op'ning for a time,
 'Tinge their black folds with gleams of scatter'd light,
 Then, swiftly closing, on the brow of morn
 Condense their horrors, and in thickest gloom
 The ruddy beauty veil. They now approach
 The tow'r of Belus. Hyperanthies leads
 Through Babylon an army to chastise
 The crime of Ægypt. Teribazus here
 Parts from his princess, marches bright in steel
 Beneath his patron's banner, gathers palms
 On conquer'd Nile. To Susa he returns,
 To Ariana's residence, and bears
 Deep in his heart th' immedicable wound.
 But unreveal'd and silent was his pain;
 Nor yet in solitary shades he roam'd,
 Nor shun'd resort: but o'er his sorrows cast
 A sickly dawn of gladness, and in smiles
 Conceal'd his anguish; while the secret flame
 Rag'd in his bosom, and its peace consum'd:
 His soul still brooding o'er these mournful thoughts.

' Can I, O wisdom, find relief in thee,
 Who dost approve my passion? From the snares
 Of beauty only thou wouldst guard my heart.
 But here thyself art charm'd; where softness, grace,
 And ev'ry virtue dignify desire.
 Yet thus to love, despairing to possess,
 Of all the torments, by relentless fate
 On life inflicted, is the most severe.

Do I not feel thy warnings in my breast,
 That flight alone can save me? I will go
 Back to the learn'd Chaldeans, on the banks
 Of Ganges seek the sages; where to heav'n
 With thee my elevated soul shall tow'r.
 O wretched Teribazus! all conspires
 Against thy peace. Our mighty lord prepares
 To overwhelm the Grecians. Ev'ry youth
 Is call'd to war; and I, who lately pois'd
 With no inglorious arm the soldier's lance,
 Who near the side of Hyperanthes fought,
 Must join the throng. How therefore can I fly
 From Ariana, who with Asia's queens
 The splendid camp of Xerxes must adorn?
 Then be it so. Again I will adore
 Her gentle virtues. Her delightful voice,
 Her gracious sweetness shall again diffuse
 Resistless magic through my ravish'd heart;
 Till passion, thus with double rage inflam'd,
 Swells to destruction in my tortur'd breast,
 Then—but in vain through darkness do I search
 My fate—despair and fortune be my guides.'

The day arriv'd, when Xerxes first advanc'd
 His arms from Susa's gates. The Persian dames,
 So were accustom'd all the eastern fair,
 In sumptuous cars accompany'd his march,
 A beauteous train, by Ariana grac'd.
 Her Teribazus follows, on her wheels
 Attends and pines. Such woes oppress the youth,
 Oppress but not enervate. From the van
 He in this second conflict had withstood
 The threat'ning frown of adamantinè Mars,
 He singly, while his bravest friends recoil'd.
 His manly temples no tiara bound.
 The slender lance of Asia he disdain'd,
 And her light target. Eminent he tow'rd,
 In Grecian arms the wonder of his foes;
 Among th' Ionians were his strenuous limbs

'Train'd in the gymnic school. A fulgent casque
 Inclos'd his head. Before his face and chest
 Down to the knees an ample shield was spread.
 A pond'rous spear he shook. The well aim'd point
 Sent two Phliasians to the realms of death
 With four Tegæans, whose indignant chief,
 Brave Hegesander, vengeance breath'd in vain,
 With streaming wounds repuls'd. Thus far unmatch'd,
 His arm prevail'd; when Hyperanthes call'd
 From fight his fainting legions. Now each band
 Their languid courage reinforc'd by rest.
 Mean time with Teribazus thus conferr'd
 Th' applauding prince, 'Thou much deserving youth,
 Had twenty warriors in the dang'rous van
 Like thee maintain'd the onset, Greece had wept
 Her prostrate ranks. The weary'd fight awhile
 I now relax, till Abradates strong.
 Orontes and Mazæus are advanc'd.
 Then to the conflict will I give no pause.
 If not by prowess, yet by endless toil
 Successive numbers shall exhaust the foe.'

He said. Immers'd in sadness, scarce reply'd,
 But to himself complain'd the am'rous youth.

'Still do I languish, mourning o'er the fame.
 My arm acquires. Tormented heart! thou seat
 Of constant sorrow, what deceitful smiles
 Yet canst thou borrow from unreal hope
 To flatter life? at Ariana's feet
 What if with supplicating knees I bow,
 Implore her pity, and reveal my love.
 Wretch! canst thou climb to yon effulgent orb,
 And share the splendours, which irradiate heav'n?
 Dost thou aspire to that exalted maid,
 Great Xerxes' sister, rivaling the claim
 Of Asia's proudest potentates and kings?
 Unless within her bosom I inspir'd
 A passion fervent, as my own, nay more,

Such, as dispelling ev'ry virgin fear,
 Might, unrestrain'd, disclose its fond desire,
 My love is hopeless; and her willing hand,
 Should she bestow it, draws from Asia's lord
 On both perdition. By despair benumb'd,
 His limbs their action lose. A wish for death
 O'ercasts and chills his soul. When sudden cries
 From Ariamnes rouse his drooping pow'rs.
 Alike in manners they of equal age
 Were friends, and partners in the glorious toil
 Of war. Together they victorious chas'd
 The bleeding sons of Nile, when Ægypt's pride
 Before the sword of Hyperanthes fell.
 That lov'd companion Teribazus views
 By all abandon'd, in his gore outstretch'd
 The victor's spoil. His languid spirit starts;
 He rushes ardent from the Persian line;
 The wounded warrior in his strong embrace
 He bears away. By indignation stung,
 Fierce from the Grecians Diophantus sends
 A loud defiance. Teribazus leaves
 His rescu'd friend. His massy shield he rears;
 High-brandishing his formidable spear,
 He turns intrepid on th' approaching foe.
 Amazement follows. On he strides, and shakes
 The plumed honors of his shining crest.
 Th' ill-fated Greek awaits th' unequal fight,
 Pierc'd in the throat, with sounding arms he falls.
 Through ev'ry file the Mantineans mourn.
 Long on the slain the victor fix'd his sight
 With these reflections. By thy splendid arms
 Thou art a Greek of no ignoble rank.
 From thy ill fortune I perhaps derive
 A more conspicuous lustre—What if heav'n
 Should add new victims, such as thou, to grace
 My undeserving hand? Who knows, but she
 Might smile upon my trophies. Oh! vain thought!
 I see the pride of Asia's monarch swell
 With vengeance fatal to her beauteous head.

Disperse, ye phantom hopes. Too long, torn heart,
 Hast thou with grief contended. Lo! I plant
 My foot this moment on the verge of death,
 By fame invited, by despair impell'd
 To pass th' irremeable bound. No more
 Shall Teribazus backward turn his step,
 But here conclude his doom. Then cease to heave,
 'Thou troubled bosom, ev'ry thought be calm
 Now at th' approach of everlasting peace.'

He ended; when a mighty foe drew nigh,
 Not less, than Dithyrambus. Ere they join'd,
 The Persian warrior to the Greek began.

'Art thou th' unconquerable chief, who mow'd
 Our battle down? That eagle on thy shield
 Too well proclaims thee. To attempt thy force
 I rashly purpos'd. That my single arm
 Thou deign'st to meet, accept my thanks, and know,
 The thought of conquest less employs my soul,
 Than admiration of thy glorious deeds,
 And that by thee I cannot fall disgrac'd.'

He ceas'd. These words the Thespian youth return'd
 Of all the praises from thy gen'rous mouth
 The only portion, my desert may claim,
 Is this my bold adventure to confront
 Thee, yet unmatch'd. What Grecian hath not mark'd
 Thy flaming steel? From Asia's boundless camp
 Not one hath equall'd thy victorious might.
 But whence thy armour of the Grecian form?
 Whence thy tall spear, thy helmet? Whence the weight
 Of that strong shield? Unlike thy eastern friends,
 O if thou be'st some fugitive, who, lost
 To liberty and virtue, art become
 A tyrant's vile stipendiary, that arm,
 That valour thus triumphant I deplore,
 Which after all their efforts and success
 Deserve no honor from the gods, or men;

Here Teribazus in a sigh rejoin'd.

'I am to Greece a stranger, am a wretch
To thee unknown, who courts this hour to die,
Yet not ignobly, but in death to raise
My name from darkness, while I end my woes.'

The Grecian then. 'I view thee, and I mourn.
A dignity, which virtue only bears,
Firm resolution, seated on thy brow,
Though grief hath dimm'd thy drooping eye, demand
My veneration: and, whatever be
The malice of thy fortune, what the cares,
Infesting thus thy quiet, they create
Within my breast the pity of a friend.
Why then, constraining my reluctant hand
To act against thee, will thy might support
Th' unjust ambition of malignant kings,
The foes to virtue, liberty and peace?
Yet free from rage, or enmity I lift
My adverse weapon. Victory I ask.
Thy life may fate for happier days reserve.'

This said, their beaming lance they protend,
Of hostile hate, or fury both devoid,
As on the Isthmian or Olympic sands
For fame alone contending. Either host,
Pois'd on their arms, in silent wonder gaze.
The fight commences. Soon the Grecian spear,
Which, all the day in constant battle worn,
Unnumber'd shields and corselets had transfix'd,
Against the Persian buckler, shiv'ring, breaks,
Its master's arm disarming. Then began
The sense of honour, and the dread of shame
To swell in Dithyrambus. Undismay'd,
He grappled with his foe, and instant seiz'd
His threat'ning spear, before th' uplifted arm
Could execute the meditated wound.
The weapon burst between their struggling grasp.
Their hold they loosen, bare their shining swords,

With equal swiftness to defend, or charge
 Each active youth advances or recedes.
 On ev'ry side they traverse. Now direct,
 Obliquely now the wheeling blades descend.
 Still is the conflict dubious; when the Greek,
 Dissembling, points his falchion to the ground,
 His arm depressing, as o'ercome by toil:
 While with his buckler cautious he repels
 The blows, repeated by his active foe.
 Greece trembles for her hero. Joy pervades
 The ranks of Asia; Hyperanthes strides
 Before the line, preparing to receive
 His friend triumphant: while the wary Greek
 Calm and defensive bears th' assault. At last,
 As by th' incautious fury of his strokes,
 The Persian swung his cov'ring shield aside,
 The fatal moment Dithyrambus seiz'd.
 Light darting forward with his feet outstretch'd,
 Between th' unguarded ribs he plung'd his steel,
 Affection, grief and terror wing the speed
 Of Hyperanthes. From his bleeding foe
 The Greek retires, not distant, and awaits
 The Persian prince. But he with watry cheeks
 In speechless anguish clasps his dying friend;
 From whose cold lip with interrupted phrase
 These accents break. 'O dearest, best of men!
 Ten thousand thoughts of gratitude and love
 Are struggling in my heart—O'erpow'ring fate
 Denies my voice the utterance—O my friend!
 O Hyperanthes! Hear my tongue unfold
 What, had I liv'd, thou never should'st have known.
 I lov'd thy sister. With despair I lov'd.
 Soliciting this honorable doom,
 Without regret in Persia's sight and thine
 I fall.' Th' inexorable hand of fate
 Weighs down his eye-lids, and the gloom of death
 His fleeting light eternally o'ershades.
 Him on Choaspes o'er the blooming verge
 A frantic mother shall bewail; shall strew

Her silver tresses in the crystal wave:
 While all the shores re-echo to the name,
 Of Teribazus lost. Th' afflicted prince,
 Contemplating in tears the pallid corse,
 Vents in these words the bitterness of grief.

'Oh! Teribazus! Oh! my friend whose loss
 I will deplore for ever. Oh! what pow'r,
 By me, by thee offended, clos'd thy breast
 To Hyperanthes in distrust unkind!
 She would, she must have lov'd thee—now no more
 Thy placid virtues, thy instructive tongue
 Shall drop their sweetness on my secret hours.
 But in complaints doth friendship waste the time,
 Which to immediate vengeance should be given?'

He ended, rushing furious on the Greek;
 Who, while his gallant enemy expir'd,
 While Hyperanthes tenderly receiv'd
 The last embraces of his gasping friend,
 Stood nigh, reclin'd in sadness on his shield,
 And in the pride of victory repin'd.
 Unmark'd, his foe approach'd. But forward sprung
 Diomedon. Before the Thespian youth
 Aloft he rais'd his targe, and loudly thus.

'Hold thee, Barbarian, from a life more worth,
 Than thou and Xerxes with his host of slaves'

His words he seconds with his rapid lance.
 Soon a tremendous conflict had ensu'd;
 But Intaphernes, Mindus, and a croud
 Of Persian lords, advancing, fill the space
 Betwixt th' encount'ring chiefs. In mutual wrath,
 With fruitless efforts they attempt the fight.
 So rage two bulls along th' opposing banks
 Of some deep flood, which parts the fruitful mead.
 Defiance thunders from their angry mouths

In vain: in vain the furrow'd sod they rend;
Wide rolls the stream, and intercepts the war.

As by malignant fortune if a drop
Of moisture mingles with a burning mass
Of liquid metal, instant show'rs of death
On ev'ry side th' exploding fluid spreads;
So disappointment irritates the flame
Of fierce Plataea's chief, whose vengeance bursts
In wide destruction. Embas, Daucus fall,
Arsæus, Ochus, Mendes, Artias die;
And ten most hardy of th' immortal guard,
To shivers breaking on the Grecian shield
Their gold-embellish'd weapons, raise a mound.
O'er thy pale body, O in prime destroy'd,
Of Asia's garden once the fairest plant,
Fall'n Teribazus! Thy distracted friend
From this thy temporary tomb is dragg'd
By forceful zeal of satraps to the shore;
Where then the brave Abrocomes arrang'd
The succours new, by Abradates brought,
Orontes and Mazæus. Turning swift,
Abrocomes inform'd his brother thus.

'Strong reinforcement from th' immortal guard
Pandates bold to Intaphernes leads,
In charge to harass by perpetual toil
Those Grecians next the mountain. Thou unite
To me thy valour. Here the hostile ranks
Less stable seem. Our joint impression try;
Let all the weight of battle here impend.
Rouse, Hyperanthes. Give regret to winds.
Who hath not lost a friend this direful day?
Let not our private cares assist the Greeks
'Too strong already; or let sorrow act:
Mourn and revenge. These animating words
Send Hyperanthes to the foremost line.
His vengeful ardor leads. The battle joins.

Who stemm'd this tide of onset? Who imbru'd
 His shining spear the first in Persian blood?
 Eupalamus. Artembares he slew
 With Derdas fierce, whom Caucasus had rear'd
 On his tempestuous brow, the savage sons
 Of violence and rapine. But their doom
 Fires Hyperanthes, whose vindictive blade
 Arrests the victor in his haughty course.
 Beneath the strong Abrocomes o'erwhelm'd,
 Melissus swells the number of the dead.
 None could Mycenæ boast of prouder birth,
 Than young Melissus, who in silver mail
 The line embellish'd. He in Cirrha's mead,
 Where high Parnassus from his double top
 O'ershades the Pythian games, the envy'd prize
 Of fame obtain'd. Low sinks his laurell'd head
 In death's cold night; and horrid gore deforms
 The graceful hair. Impatient to revenge
 Aristobulus strides before the van.
 A storm of fury darkens all his brow.
 Around he rolls his gloomy eye. For death
 Is Alyattes mark'd, of regal blood,
 Deriv'd from Cræsus, once imperial lord
 Of nations. Him the nymphs of Halys wept;
 When, with delusive oracles beguil'd
 By Delphi's god, he pass'd their fatal waves
 A mighty empire to dissolve: nor knew
 Th' ill-destin'd prince, that envious fortune watch'd
 That direful moment from his hand to wrest
 The sceptre of his fathers. In the shade
 Of humble life his race on Tmolus' brow
 Lay hid; till, rous'd to battle, on this field
 Sinks Alyattes, and a royal breed
 In him extinct forever. Lycis dies,
 For boist'rous war ill-chosen. He was skill'd
 To tune the lulling flute, and melt the heart,
 Or with his pipe's awak'ning strain allure
 The lovely dames of Lydia to the dance.
 They on the verdant level graceful mov'd

In vary'd measures; while the cooling breeze
 Beneath their swelling garments wanton'd o'er
 Their snowy breasts, and smooth Cayster's stream,
 Soft gliding, murmur'd by. The hostile blade
 Draws forth his entrails. Prone he falls. Not long
 The victor triumphs. From the prostrate corse
 Of Lycis while insulting he extracts
 The reeking weapon, Hyperanthes' steel
 Invades his knee, and cuts the sinewy cords.
 The Mycenæans with uplifted shields,
 Corinthians and Phliasians close around
 The wounded chieftain. In redoubled rage
 The contest glows. Abrocomes incites
 Each noble Persian. Each his voice obeys.
 Here Abradates, there Mazæus press,
 Orontes and Hydarnes. None retire
 From toil, or peril. Urg'd on ev'ry side,
 Mycenæ's band to fortune leave their chief.
 Despairing, raging, destitute he stands,
 Propt on his spear. His wound forbids retreat.
 None, but his brother, Eumenes, abides
 The dire extremity. His studded orb
 Is held defensive. On his arm the sword
 Of Hyperanthes rapidly descends.
 Down drops the buckler, and the sever'd hand
 Resigns its hold. The unprotected pair
 By Asia's hero to the ground are swept;
 As to a reaper crimson poppies low'r
 Their heads luxuriant on the yellow plain.
 From both their breasts the vital currents flow,
 And mix their streams. Elate the Persians pour
 Their numbers, deep'ning on the foe dismay'd.
 The Greeks their station painfully maintain.
 This Anaxander saw, whose faithless tongue
 His colleague Leontiades bespake.

'The hour is come to serve our Persian friends.
 Behold, the Greeks are press'd. Let Thebes retire,
 A bloodless conquest yielding to the king.'

'This said, he drew his Thebans from their post,
 Not with unpunish'd treachery. The lance
 Of Abradates gor'd their foul retreat;
 Nor knew the Asian chief, that Asia's friends
 Before him bled. Mean time, as mighty Jove,
 Or he more ancient on the throne of heav'n,
 When from the womb of Chaos dark the world
 Emerg'd to birth, where'er he view'd the jar
 Of atoms yet discordant and unform'd,
 Confusion thence with pow'rful voice dispell'd,
 'Till light and order universal reign'd;
 So from the hill Leonidas survey'd
 The various war. He saw the Theban rout;
 That Corinth, Phlius and Mycenæ look'd
 Affrighted backward. Instantly his charge
 Is borne by Maron, whom obedience wings,
 Precipitating down the sacred cave,
 That Sparta's ranks, advancing, should repair
 The disunited phalanx. Ere they move,
 Dienece inspires them. Fame, my friends,
 Calls forth your valour in a signal hour.
 For you this glorious crisis she reserv'd,
 Laconia's splendour to assert. Young man,
 Son of Megistias, follow. He conducts
 Th' experienc'd troop; They lock their shields and wedg'd
 In dense arrangement, repossess the void,
 Left by the faithless Thebans, and repulse
 Th' exulting Persians. When with efforts vain
 These oft renew'd the contest, and recoil'd,
 As oft confounded with diminish'd ranks;
 Lo! Hyperanthes blush'd, repeating late
 The words of Artemisia. 'Learn, O chiefs,
 The only means of glory and success.
 Unlike the others, whom we newly chas'd,
 These are a band, selected from the Greeks,
 Perhaps the Spartans, whom we often hear
 By Demaratus prais'd. To break their line
 'In vain we struggle, unarray'd and lax,

Depriv'd of union. Do not we preside
 O'er Asia's armies, and our courage boast,
 Our martial art above the vulgar herd?
 Let us, ye chiefs, attempt in order'd ranks
 To form a troop and emulate the foe.'

They wait not dubious. On the Malian shore
 In gloomy depth a column soon is form'd
 Of all the nobles, Abradates strong,
 Orontes bold, Mazæus, and the might
 Of brave Abrocomes with each, who bore
 The highest honors, and excell'd in arms;
 Themselves the lords of nations, who before
 The throne of Xerxes tributary bow'd.
 To these succeed a chosen number, drawn
 From Asia's legions, vaunted most in fight;
 Who from their king perpetual stipends share;
 Who, station'd round the provinces, by force
 His tyranny uphold. In ev'ry part
 Is Hyperanthes active, ardent seen
 Throughout the huge battalion. He adjusts
 Their equal range, then cautious, lest on march
 Their unaccustom'd order should relax,
 Full in the center of the foremost rank
 Orontes plants, committing to his hand
 Th' imperial standard; whose expanded folds
 Glow'd in the air, presenting to the sun
 The richest dye of Tyre. The royal bird
 Amid the gorgeous tincture shone express'd
 In high embroider'd gold. The wary prince
 On this conspicuous, leading sign of war
 Commands each satrap, posted in the van,
 To fix his eye regardful, to direct
 By this alone his even pace and slow,
 Retiring or advancing. So the star,
 Chief of the spangles on that fancy'd bear,
 Once an Idæan nymph, and nurse of Jove,
 Bright Cynosura to the Boreal pole
 Attracts the sailor's eye; when distance hides

The headland signals, and her guiding ray,
 New-ris'n, she throws. The hero next appoints,
 That ev'ry warrior through the length'ning files,
 Observing none, but those before him plac'd,
 Shall watch their motions, and their steps pursue.
 Nor is th' important thicket next the pass
 Forgot. Two thousand of th' immortal guard
 That station seize. His orders all perform'd,
 Close by the standard he assumes his post.
 Intrepid thence he animates his friends.

'Heroic chieftains, whose unconquer'd force
 Rebellious Ægypt, and the Libyan felt,
 Think, what the splendour of your former deeds
 From you exacts. Remember, from the great
 Illustrious actions are a debt to fame.
 No middle path remains for them to tread,
 Whom she hath once ennobled. Lo! this day
 By trophies new will signalize your names,
 Or in dishonor will forever cloud.'

He said, and vig'rous all to fight proceed.
 As, when tempestuous Eurus stems the weight
 Of western Neptune, struggling through the straits,
 Which bound Alcides' labours, here the storm
 With rapid wing reverberates the tide;
 There the contending surge with furrow'd tops
 To mountains swells, and, whelming o'er the beach
 On either coast, impells the hoary foam
 On Mauritanian and Iberian strands.
 Such is the dreadful onset. Persia keeps
 Her foremost ranks unbroken, which are fill'd
 By chosen warriors; while the num'rous croud,
 Though still promiscuous pouring from behind,
 Give weight and pressure to th' embattled chiefs,
 Despising danger. Like the mural strength
 Of some proud city, bulwark'd round and arm'd
 With rising tow'rs to guard her wealthy stores,
 Immoveable, impenetrable stood

Laconia's serry'd phalanx. In their face
 Grim tyranny her threat'ning fetters shakes,
 Red havoc grinds insatiable his jaws.
 Greece is behind, entrusting to their swords
 Her laws, her freedom, and the sacred urns
 Of their forefathers. Present now to thought
 Their altars rise, the mansions of their birth,
 Whate'er they honor, venerate and love.

Bright in the Persian van thr' exalted lance
 Of Hyperanthes flam'd. Beside him press'd
 Abrocomes, Hydarnes, and the bulk
 Of Abradates terrible in war.
 Firm, as a Memphian pyramid, was seen
 Dienece; while Agis close in rank
 With Menalippus, and the added strength
 Of dauntless Maron, their connected shields
 Upheld. Each unrelax'd array maintains
 The conflict undecided; nor could Greece
 Repel the adverse numbers, nor the weight
 Of Asia's band select remove the Greeks.

Swift from Laconia's king, perceiving soon
 The Persian's new arrangement, Medon flew,
 Who thus the staid Dienece address'd.

'Leonidas commands the Spartan ranks
 To measure back some paces. Soon, he deems,
 The unexperienc'd foes in wild pursuit
 Will break their order.' Then the charge renew,

This heard, the signal of retreat is giv'n.
 The Spartans seem to yield. The Persians stop;
 Astonishment restrains them, and the doubt
 Of unexpected victory. Their floth
 Abrocomes awakens. 'By the sun
 They fly before us. My victorious friends;
 Do you delay to enter Greece. Away,
 Rush on intrepid. I already hear

Our horse, our chariots thund'ring on her plains.
 I see her temples wrapt in Persian fires.'

He spake. In hurry'd violence they roll
 Tumultuous forward. All in headlong pace
 Disjoin their order, and the line dissolve.
 This when the sage Dieneces describes,
 The Spartans halt, returning to the charge
 With sudden vigour. In a moment pierc'd
 By his resistless steel, Orontes falls
 And quits th' imperial banner. This the chief
 In triumph waves. The spartans press the foe.
 Close-wedg'd and square, in slow, progressive pace
 O'er heaps of mangled carcasses and arms
 Invincible they tread. Composing flutes
 Each thought, each motion harmonize. No rage
 Untunes their souls. The phalanx yet more deep
 Of Medon follows; while the lighter bands
 Glide by the flanks, and reach the broken foe.
 Amid their flight what vengeance from the arm
 Of Alpheus falls? O'er all in swift pursuit
 Was he renown'd. His active feet had match'd
 The son of Peleus in the dusty course;
 But now the wrongs, the long-remember'd wrongs
 Of Polydorus animate his strength
 With ten fold vigour. Like th' empurpled moon,
 When in eclipse her silver disk hath lost
 The wonted light, his buckler's polish'd face
 Is now obscur'd; the figur'd bosses drop
 In crimson, spouting from his deathful strokes.
 As, when with horror wing'd, a whirlwind rends
 A shatter'd navy; from the ocean cast,
 Enormous fragments hide the level beach;
 Such as dejected Persia late beheld
 On Thessaly's unnavigable strand:
 Thus o'er the champain satraps lay bestrewn
 By Alpheus, persevering in pursuit
 Beyond the pass. Not Phoebus could inflict
 On Niobe more vengeance, when, incens'd

By her maternal arrogance, which scorn'd
 Latona's race, he twang'd his ireful bow,
 And one by one from youth and beauty hurl'd
 Her sons to Pluto; nor severer pangs
 That mother felt, than pierc'd the gen'rous soul
 Of Hyperanthes, while his noblest friends
 On ev'ry side lay gasping. With despair
 He still contends. Th' immortals from their stand
 Behind th' entangling thicket next the pass
 His signal rouses. Ere they clear their way,
 Well-caution'd Medon from the close defile
 Two thousand Locrians pours. An aspect new
 The fight assumes. Through implicated shrubs
 Confusion waves each banner. Falchions, spears
 And shields are all encumber'd; till the Greeks
 Had forc'd a passage to the yielding foe.
 Then Medon's arm is felt. The dreadful boar,
 Wide-wasting once the Calydonian fields,
 In fury breaking from his gloomy lair,
 Rang'd with less havoc through unguarded folds,
 Than Medon, sweeping down the glitt'ring files,
 So vainly styl'd immortal. From the cliff
 Divine Melissa, and Laconia's king
 Enjoy the glories of Oileus' son.
 Fierce Alpheus too, returning from his chace,
 Joins in the slaughter. Ev'ry Persian falls.

To him the Locrian chief. 'Brave Spartan, thanks.
 Through thee my purpose is accomplish'd full.
 My phalanx here with levell'd rows of spears
 Shall guard the shatter'd bushes. Come what may
 From Asia's camp, th' assailant, flank and driv'n
 Down yonder slope, shall perish. Gods of Greece,
 You shall behold your fanes profusely deck'd
 In splendid offspring from barbarian spoils,
 Won by your free-born supplicants this day.'

'This said, he forms his ranks. Their threatening point^s
 Gleam through the thicket, whence the shiv'ring foe

Avert their sight, like passengers dismay'd,
 Who on their course by Nile's portentous banks
 Descry in ambush of perfidious reeds
 The crocodile's fell teeth. Contiguous lay
 Thermopylæ. Dieneces secur'd
 The narrow mouth. Two lines the Spartans shew'd,
 One tow'rd the plain observ'd the Persian camp;
 One, led by Agis, fac'd th' interior pass.

Not yet discourag'd, Hyperanthes strives
 The scatter'd host to rally. He exhorts,
 Entreats, at length indignant thus exclaims.

'Degen'rate Persians! to sepulchral dust
 Could breath return, your fathers from the tomb
 Would utter groans. Inglorious, do ye leave
 Behind you Persia's standard to adorn
 Some Grecian temple? Can your splended cars,
 Voluptuous couches, and delicious boards,
 Your gold, your gems, ye satraps, be preserv'd
 By cowardice and flight? The eunuch slave
 Will scorn such lords, your women loath your beds.'

Few hear him, fewer follow; while the fight
 His unabating courage oft renews,
 As oft repuls'd with danger: till, by all
 Deserted, mixing in the gen'ral rout,
 He yields to fortune, and regains the camp.
 In short advances thus the dying tide
 Beats for awhile against the shelving strand,
 Still by degrees retiring, and at last
 Within the bosom of the main subsides.

'Though Hyperanthes from the fight was driv'n
 Close to the mountain, whose indented side
 There gaye the widen'd pass an ample space
 For numbers to embattle, still his post
 Bold Intaphernes underneath a cliff
 Against the firm Plataean line maintain'd,

On him look'd down Leonidas like Death,
 When, from his iron cavern call'd by Jove,
 He stands gigantic on a mountain's head;
 Whence he commands th' affrighted earth to quake,
 And, crags and forests in his direful grasp
 High-wielding, dashes on a town below,
 Whose deeds of black impiety provoke
 The long-enduring gods. Around the verge
 Of Oeta, curving to a crescent's shape,
 The marbles, timbers, fragments lay amass'd.
 The Helots, peasants, mariners attend
 In order nigh Leonidas. They watch
 His look. He gives the signal. Rous'd at once
 The force, the skill, activity and zeal
 Of thousands are combin'd. Down rush the piles.
 Trees, roll'd on trees, with mingled rock descend,
 Unintermitted ruin. Loud resound
 The hollow trunks against the mountain's side.
 Swift bounds each craggy mass. The foes below
 Look up aghast, in horror shrink and die.
 Whole troops, o'erwhelm'd beneath th' enormous load,
 Lie hid and lost, as never they had known
 A name, or being. Intaphernes clad
 In regal splendour, progeny of kings,
 Who rul'd Damascus, and the Syrian palms,
 Here slept forever. Thousands of his train
 In that broad space the ruins had not reach'd.
 Back to their camp a passage they attempt
 Through Lacedæmon's line. Them Agis stopp'd.
 Before his powerful arm Pandates fell,
 Sosarmes, Tachos. Menalippus dy'd
 His youthful steel in blood. The mightier spear
 Of Maron pierc'd battalions, and enlarg'd
 The track of slaughter. Backward turn'd the rout,
 Nor found a milder fate. Th' unweary'd swords
 Of Dithyrambus and Diomedon,
 Who from the hill are wheeling on their flank,
 Still flash tremendous. To the shore they fly,
 At once envelop'd by successive bands

Of different Grecians. From the gulph profound
Perdition here inevitable frowns,
While there, encircled by a grove of spears,
'They stand devoted hecatombs to Mars.
Now not a moment's interval delays
'Their gen'ral doom; but down the Malian steep
Prone are they hurry'd to th' expanded arms
Of horror, rising from the oozy deep,
And grasping all their numbers, as they fall
'The dire confusion like a storm invades
'The chafing surge. Whole troops Bellona rolls
In one vast ruin from the craggy ridge.
O'er all their arms, their ensigns, deep-engulph'd;
With hideous roar the waves forever close.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK IX.

THE ARGUMENT.

Night coming on, the Grecians retire to their tents. A guard is placed on the Phocian wall under the command of Agis. He admits into the camp a lady, accompanied by a single slave, and conducts them to Leonidas; when she discovers herself to be Ariana, sister of Xerxes and Hyperanthes, and sues for the body of Teribazus; which being found among the slain, she kills herself upon it. The slave, who attended her, proves to be Polydorus, brother to Alpheus and Maron, and who had been formerly carried into captivity by a Phœnician pirate. He relates before an assembly of the chiefs a message from Demaratus to the Spartans, which discloses the treachery of the Thebans, and of Epialtes, the Malian, who had undertaken to lead part of the Persian army through a pass among the mountains of Oeta. This information throws the council into a great tumult, which is pacified by Leonidas, who sends Alpheus to observe the motions of these Persians, and Dieneces with a party of Lacedæmonians to support the Phocians, with whom the defence of these passages in the hills had been entrusted. In the mean time Agis sends the bodies of Teribazus and Ariana to the camp of Xerxes.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK IX.

IN sable vesture, spangled o'er with stars,
The night assum'd her throne. Recall'd from war,
Their toil, protracted long, the Greeks forget,
Dissolv'd in silent slumber, all; but those,
Who watch th' uncertain perils of the dark,
A hundred warriors. Agis was their chief.
High on the wall, intent the hero sat.
Fresh winds across the undulating bay
From Asia's host the various din convey'd
In one deep murmur, swelling on his ear.
When by the sound of footsteps down the pass
Alarm'd he calls aloud. 'What feet are these,
Which beat the echoing pavement of the rock?
Reply, nor tempt inevitable fate.'

A voice reply'd. 'No enemies we come,
But crave admittance in an humble tone.'

The Spartan answers. 'Through the midnight shade
What purpose draws your wand'ring steps abroad?'

To whom the stranger. 'We are friends to Greece:
Through thy assistance we implore access
To Lacedæmon's king.' The cautious Greek
Still hesitates, when musically sweet
A tender voice his wond'ring ear allures.

'O gen'rous warrior, listen to the pray'r
Of one distress'd, whom grief alone hath led
Through midnight shades to these victorious tents,
A wretched woman, innocent of fraud.'

The chief, descending, through th' unfolded gates
 Upheld a flaming torch. The light disclos'd
 One first in servile garments. Near his side
 A woman graceful and majestic stood,
 Not with an aspect rivalling the pow'r
 Of fatal Helen, or th' insnaring charms
 Of love's soft queen. but such, as far surpass'd,
 Whate'er the lilly blending with the rose,
 Spreads on the cheek of beauty soon to fade;
 Such, as express'd a mind, by wisdom rul'd,
 By sweetness temper'd; virtue's purest light
 Illumining the countenance divine:
 Yet could not soften rig'rous fate, nor charm
 Malignant fortune to revere the good;
 Which oft with anguish rends a spotless heart,
 And oft associates wisdom with despair.
 In courteous phrase began the chief humane.

✕
 'Exalted fair, whose form adorns the night,
 Forbear to blame the vigilance of war.
 My slow compliance to the rigid laws
 Of Mars impute. In me no longer pause
 Shall from the presence of our king withhold
 This thy apparent dignity and worth.'

Here ending, he conducts her. At the call
 Of his lov'd brother from his couch arose
 Leonidas. In wonder he survey'd
 Th' illustrious virgin, whom his presence aw'd.
 Her eye submissive to the ground declin'd
 In veneration of the godlike man.
 His mien, his voice her anxious dread dispel,
 Benevolent and hospitable thus.

'Thy looks, fair stranger. amiable and great,
 A mind delineate, which, from all, commands
 Supreme regard. Relate, thou noble dame,
 By what relentless destiny compell'd,
 Thy tender feet the paths of darkness tread;
 Reliease th' afflictions, whence thy virtue mourns.'

On her wan cheek a sudden blush arose
 Like day, first dawning on the twilight pale;
 When, wrapt in grief, these words a passage found.

'If to be most unhappy, and to know,
 That hope is irrecoverably fled;
 If to be great and wretched may deserve
 Commiseration from the brave: behold,
 Thou glorious leader of unconquer'd bands,
 Behold, descended from Darius' loins,
 'Th' afflicted Ariana; and my pray'r
 Accept with pity, nor my tears disdain.
 First, that I lov'd the best of human race,
 Heroic, wise, adorn'd by ev'ry art,
 Of shame unconscious doth my heart reveal.
 'This day, in Grecian arms conspicuous clad,
 He fought, he fell. A passion, long conceal'd,
 For me alas! within my brother's arms
 His dying breath resigning, he disclos'd.
 Oh! I will stay my sorrows! will forbid
 My eyes to stream before thee, and my breast,
 O'erwhelm'd by anguish, will from sighs restrain!
 For why should thy humanity be griev'd
 At my distress, why learn from me to mourn
 The lot of mortals, doom'd to pain and woe.
 Hear then, O king, and grant my sole request,
 To seek his body in the heaps of slain.'

Thus to the hero su'd the royal maid,
 Resembling Ceres in majestic woe,
 When supplicating Jove, from Stygian gloom,
 And Pluto's black embraces, to redeem
 Her lov'd and lost Proserpina. Awhile
 On Ariana fixing steadfast eyes,
 These tender thoughts Leonidas recall'd.

'Such are thy sorrows, O forever dear,
 Who now at Lacedæmon dost deplore
 My everlasting absence.' Then aside

He turn'd and sigh'd. Recov'ring, he address'd
 His brother. 'Most beneficent of men,
 Attend, assist this princess.' Night retires
 Before the purple-winged morn. A band
 Is call'd. The well-remember'd spot they find,
 Where Teribazus from his dying hand
 Dropt in their sight his formidable sword.
 Soon from beneath a pile of Asian dead
 They draw the hero, by his armour known.

Then, Ariana, what transcending pangs
 Were thine! what horrors! In thy tender breast
 Love still was mightiest. On the bosom cold
 Of Teribazus, grief-distracted maid,
 Thy beauteous limbs were thrown. Thy snowy hue
 The clotted gore disfigur'd. On his wounds
 Loose flow'd thy hair, and, bubbling from thy eyes,
 Impetuous sorrow lav'd th' empurpled clay.
 When forth in groans these lamentations broke.

'O torn forever from these weeping eyes!
 Thou, who despairing to obtain a heart,
 Which then most lov'd thee, didst untimely yield
 Thy life to fate's inevitable dart
 For her, who now in agony reveals
 Her tender passion, who repeats her vows
 To thy deaf ear, who fondly to her own
 Unites thy cheek insensible and cold.
 Alas! do those unmoving, ghastly orbs
 Perceive my gushing sorrow! Can that heart
 At my complaint dissolve the ice of death
 To share my suit'rings! Never, never more
 Shall Ariana bend a list'ning ear
 To thy enchanting eloquence, nor feast
 Her mind on wisdom from thy copious tongue!
 Oh! bitter, insurmountable distress!'

She could no more. Invincible despair
 Suppress'd all utt'rance. As a marble form,

Fix'd on the solemn sepulchre, inclines
 The silent head in imitated woe
 O'er some dead hero, whom his country lov'd;
 Entranc'd by anguish, o'er the breathless clay
 So hung the princess. On the gory breach,
 Whence life had issu'd by the fatal blow,
 Mute for a space and motionless she gaz'd;
 When thus in accents firm. 'Imperial pomp,
 Foe to my quiet, take my last farewell.
 There is a state, where only virtue holds
 The rank supreme. My Teribazus there
 From his high order must descend to mine.'

'Then with no trembling hand, no change of look
 She drew a poniard, which her garment veil'd;
 And instant sheathing in her heart the blade,
 On her slain lover silent sunk in death.
 The unexpected stroke prevents the care
 Of Agis, pierc'd by horror and distress,
 Like one, who, standing on a stormy beach,
 Beholds a found'ring vessel, by the deep
 At once engulph'd; his pity feels and mourns,
 Depriv'd of pow'r to save: so Agis view'd
 The prostrate pair. He dropp'd a tear and thus.

'Oh! much lamented! Heavy on your heads
 Hath evil fall'n, which o'er your pale remains
 Commands this sorrow from a stranger's eye.
 Illustrious ruins! May the grave impart
 That peace, which life deny'd! And now receive
 This pious office from a hand unknown.'

He spake, unclasping from his shoulders broad
 His ample robe. He strew'd the waving folds
 O'er each wan visage, turning then, address'd
 The slave, in mute dejection standing near.

'Thou, who attendant on this hapless fair,
 Hast view'd this dreadful spectacle, return.

These bleeding reliques bear to Persia's king,
Thou with four captives, whom I free from bonds.'

'Art thou a Spartan, interrupts the slave?
Dost thou command me to return, and pine
In climes unblest'd by liberty, or laws?
Grant me to see Leonidas. Alone
Let him decide, if wretched, as I seem,
I may not claim protection from this camp.'

'Whoe'er thou art,' rejoins the chief, amaz'd,
But not offended, 'thy ignoble garb
Conceal'd a spirit, which I now revere.
Thy countenance demands a better lot,
'Than I, a stranger to thy hidden worth,
Unconscious offer'd. Freedom dwells in Greece,
Humanity and justice. Thou shalt see
Leonidas their guardian.' To the king
He leads him straight, presents him in these words.

'In mind superior to the base attire,
Which marks his limbs with shame, a stranger comes,
'Who thy protection claims.' The slave subjoins.

'I stand thy suppliant now. Thou soon shalt learn
If I deserve thy favor. I request
To meet th' assembled chieftians of this host.
Oh! I am fraught with tidings, which import
The weal of ev'ry Grecian. Agis swift,
Appointed by Leonidas, convenes
The diff'rent leaders. To the tent they speed.
Before them call'd, the stranger thus began.

'O Alpheus! Maron! Hither turn your sight, •
And know your brother.' From their seats they start,
From either breaks in ecstasy the name
Of Polydorus. 'To his dear embrace
Each fondly strives to rush; but he withstands:
While down his cheek a flood of anguish pours

From his dejected eyes, in torture bent
On that vile garb, dishonoring his form.
At length these accents, intermix'd with groans,
A passage found, while mute attention gaz'd.

' You first should know, if this unhappy slave
Yet merits your embraces.' Then approach'd
Leonidas. Before him all recede.
Ev'n Alpheus 'self, and yields his brother's hand;
Which in his own the regal hero press'd.
Still Polydorus on his gloomy front
Repugnance stern to consolation bore;
When thus the king with majesty benign.

' Lo! ev'ry heart is open to thy worth.
Injurious fortune, and enfeebling time
By servitude and grief severely try
A lib'ral spirit. Try'd, but not subdu'd,
Do thou appear. Whatever be our lot
Is heav'n's appointment. Patience best becomes
The citizen and soldier. Let the sight
Of friends and brethren dissipate thy gloom.'

Of men the gentlest, Agis too advanc'd,
Who with increas'd humanity began.

' Now in thy native liberty secure,
Smile on thy pass'd affliction, and relate,
What chance restores thy merit to the arms
Of friends and kindred.' Polydorus then—

' I was a Spartan. When my tender prime
On manhood border'd, from Laconia's shores
Snatch'd by Phœnician pirates, I was sold
A slave, by Hyperanthes bought and giv'n
To Ariana. Gracious was her hand.
But I remain'd a bondman, still estrang'd
From Lacedæmon. Demaratus oft
In friendly sorrow would my lot deplore;

Nor less his own ill-fated virtue mourn'd,
 Lost to his country in a servile court,
 The centre of corruption; where in smiles
 Are painted envy, treachery and hate,
 With rankling malice; where alone sincere
 The dissolute seek no disguise: where those,
 Possessing all, a monarch can bestow,
 Are far less happy, than the meanest heir
 To freedom, far more groveling, than the slave,
 Who serves their cruel pride. Yet here the sun
 Ten times his yearly circle hath renew'd,
 Since Polydorus hath in bondage groan'd.
 My bloom is pass'd, or, pining in despair,
 Untimely wither'd. I at last return
 A messenger of fate, who tidings bear
 Of desolation.' Here he paus'd in grief
 Redoubled; when Leonidas. ' Proceed.
 Should from thy lips inevitable death
 To all be threaten'd, thou art heard by none
 Whose dauntless hearts can entertain a thought
 But how to fall the noblest.' Thus the king.
 The rest in speechless expectation wait.
 Such was the solemn silence, which o'erspread
 The shrine of Ammon, or Dodona's shades,
 When anxious mortals from the mouth of Jove
 Their doom explor'd. Nor Polydorus long
 Suspends the counsel, but resumes his tale.

' As I this night accompany'd the steps
 Of Ariana, near the pass we saw
 A restless form, now traversing the way,
 Now, as a statue, rivetted by doubt,
 Then on a sudden starting to renew
 An eager pace. As nearer we approach'd,
 He by the moon, which glimmer'd on our heads,
 Descri'd us. Straight advancing, whither bent
 Our midnight course, he ask'd. I knew the voice
 Of Demaratus. To my breast I clasp'd
 The venerable exile, and reply'd.

Laconia's camp we seek. Demand no more.
 Farewell. He wept. Be heav'n thy guide, he said,
 Thrice happy Polydorus. Thou again
 May'st visit Sparta, to these eyes deny'd.
 Soon as arriv'd at those triumphant tents,
 Say to the Spartans from their exil'd king,
 Although their blind credulity depriv'd
 The wretched Demaratus of his home;
 From ev'ry joy seclud'd, from his wife,
 His offspring torn, his countrymen and friends,
 Him from his virtue they could ne'er divide.
 Say, that ev'n here, where all are kings, or slaves,
 Amid the riot of flagitious courts
 Not quite extinct his Spartan spirit glows,
 Though grief hath dimm'd its fires. Rememb'ring this,
 Report, that newly to the Persian host
 Return'd a Malian, Epialtes nam'd,
 Who, as a spy, the Grecian tents had sought.
 He to the monarch magnify'd his art,
 Which by delusive eloquence had wrought
 The Greeks to such despair; that ev'ry band
 To Persia's sov'reign standard would have bow'd;
 Had not the spirit of a single chief,
 By fear unconquer'd, and on death resolv'd,
 Restor'd their valor: therefore would the king
 Trust to his guidance a selected force,
 They soon shall pierce th' unguarded bounds of Greece
 Through a neglected aperture above,
 Where no Leonidas should bar their way.
 Meantime by him the treach'rous Thebans sent
 Assurance of their aid. Th' assenting prince
 At once decreed two myriads to advance
 With Hyperanthes. Ev'ry lord besides,
 Whom youth, or courage, or ambition warm,
 Rous'd by the traitor's eloquence, attend
 From all the nations with a rival zeal
 'To enter Greece the foremost.' In a sigh
 He clos'd—like me. Tremendous from his seat
 Up rose Diomedon. His eyes were flames.

When swift on trembling Anaxander broke
These ireful accents from his livid lips.

‘Yet ere we fall, O traitor, shall this arm
To hell’s avenging furies sink thy head.’

All now is tumult. Ev’ry bosom swells
With wrath untam’d and vengeance. Half unsheath’d,
Th’ impetuous falchion of Plataea flames.
But, as the Colchian sorceress, renown’d
In legends old, or Circe, when they fram’d
A potent spell, so smoothness charm’d the mair,
And lull’d Æolian rage by mystic song;
Till not a billow heav’d against the shore,
Nor ev’n the wanton-winged zephyr breath’d
The lightest whisper through the magic air:
So, when thy voice, Leonidas, is heard,
Confusion listens; ire in silent awe
Subsides. ‘Withhold this rashness,’ cries the king.
‘To proof of guilt let punishment succeed.
Not yet Barbarian shouts our camp alarm.
We still have time for vengeance, time to know,
If menae’d ruin we may yet repel,
Or how most glorious perish.’ Next arose
Dioneces, and thus th’ experienc’d man.

‘Ere they surmount our fences, Xerxes’ troops
Must learn to conquer, and the Greeks to fly.
The spears of Phocis guard that secret pass.
To them let instant messengers depart,
And note the hostile progress.’ Alpheus here.

‘Leonidas, behold, my willing feet
Shall to the Phocians bear thy high commands;
Shall climb the hill to watch th’ approaching foe.’

‘Thou active son of valour,’ quick returns
The chief of Lacedæmon, ‘in my thoughts
For ever present, when the public weal

Requires the swift, the vigilant and bold;
Go, climb, surmount the rock's aerial height,
Observe the hostile march. A Spartan band,
Dieneces, provide. Thyself conduct
Their speedy succour to our Phocian friends.'

The council rises. For this course prepar'd,
While day, declining, prompts his eager feet,
'O Polydorus,' Alpheus thus in haste,
'Long lost, and late recover'd, we must part
Again, perhaps for ever. Thou return
To kiss the sacred soil, which gave thee birth,
And calls thee back to freedom. Brother dear,
I should have sighs to give thee—but farewell.
My country chides me, loit'ring in thy arms.'

This said, he darts along, nor looks behind;
When Polydorus answers. 'Alpheus, no.
I have the marks of bondage to erase.
My blood must wash the shameful stain away.'

'We have a father,' Maron interpos'd.
'Thy unexpected presence will revive
His heavy age, now childless and forlorn.'

To him the brother with a gloomy frown,
'Ill should I comfort others. View these eyes.
Faint is their light; and vanish'd was my bloom
Before its hour of ripeness. In my breast
Grief will retain a mansion, nor by time
Be dispossess'd. Unceasing shall my soul
Brood o'er the black remembrance of my youth,
In slavery exhausted. Life to me
Hath lost its savour.' Then in sullen woe
His head declines. His brother pleads in vain.

Now in his view Dieneces appear'd
With Sparta's band. Immoveable his eyes
On them he fix'd, revolving these dark thoughts.

'I too like them from Lacedæmon spring,
 Like them instructed once to poise the spear,
 To lift the pond'rous shield. Ill destin'd wretch!
 Thy arm is grown enervate, and would sink
 Beneath a buckler's weight. Malignant fates!
 Who have compell'd my free born hand to change
 The warrior's arms for ignominious bonds;
 Would you compensate for my chains, my shame,
 My ten years anguish, and the fell despair,
 Which on my youth have prey'd; relenting once,
 Grant, I may bear my buckler to the field,
 And, known a Spartan, seek the shades below.'

'Why to be known a Spartan must thou seek
 The shades below?' Impatient Maron spake,
 'Live, and be known a Spartan by thy deeds.
 Live, and enjoy thy dignity of birth.
 Live and perform the duties, which become
 A citizen of Sparta. Still thy brow
 Frowns gloomy, still unyielding. He, who leads
 Our band, all fathers of a noble race,
 Will ne'er permit thy barren day to close
 Without an offspring to uphold the state.'

'He will, replies the brother in a glow,
 Prevailing o'er the paleness of his cheek,
 He will permit me to compleat by death
 The measure of my duty; will permit
 Me to achieve a service, which no hand
 But mine can render, to adorn his fall
 With double lustre, strike the barb'rous foe
 With endless terror, and avenge the shame
 Of an enslaved Laconian.' Closing here
 His words mysterious, quick he turn'd away
 To find the tent of Agis. There his hand
 In grateful sorrow minister'd her aid;
 While the humane, the hospitable care
 Of Agis gently by her lover's corse
 On one sad bier the pallid beauties laid

Of Ariana. He from bondage freed
 Four eastern captives, whom his gen'rous arm
 That day had spar'd in battle; then began
 This solemn charge. 'You Persians, whom my sword
 Acquir'd in war, unransom'd, shall depart.
 To you I render freedom, which you sought
 To wrest from me. One recompence I ask,
 And one alone. Transport to Asia's camp
 This bleeding princess. Bid the Persian king
 Weep o'er this flow'r, untimely cut in bloom.
 Then say, th' all-judging pow'rs have thus ordain'd:
 Thou, whose ambition o'er the groaning earth
 Leads desolation; o'er the nations spreads
 Calamity and tears; thou first shalt mourn,
 And through thy house destruction first shall range.'

Dismiss'd, they gain the rampart, where on guard
 Was Dithyrambus posted. He perceiv'd
 The mournful bier approach. To him the fate
 Of Ariana was already told.
 He met the captives, with a moisten'd eye,
 Full bent on Terizabus, sigh'd and spake.

'O that, assuming with those Grecian arms
 A Grecian spirit, thou in scorn hadst look'd
 On princes! Worth like thine, from slavish courts
 Withdrawn, had ne'er been wasted to support
 A king's injustice. Then a gentler lot
 Had bless'd thy life, or, dying, thou hadst known,
 How sweet is death for liberty. A Greek
 Affords these friendly wishes, though his head
 Had lost their honors, gather'd from thy fall,
 When fortune favor'd, or propitious Jove
 Smil'd on the better cause. Ill fated pair,
 Whom in compassion's purest dew I lave,
 But that my hand infix'd the deathful wound,
 And must be grievous to your loathing shades,
 From all the neighb'ring valleys would I cull
 Their fairest growth to strew your hearse with flow'rs,

Yet, O accept these tears and pious pray'rs!
May peace surround your ashes! May your shades
Pass o'er the silent pool to happier seats!

He ceas'd in tears. The captives leave the wall,
And slowly down Thermopylæ proceed.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK X.

THE ARGUMENT.

Medon convenes the Locrian commanders, and harangues them; repairs at midnight to his sister Melissa in the temple, and receives from her the first intelligence, that the Persians were in actual possession of the upper Straits, which had been abandoned by the Phocians. Melibœus brings her tidings of her father's death. She strictly enjoins her brother to preserve his life by a timely retreat, and recommends the enforcement of her advice to the prudence and zeal of Melibœus. In the morning the bodies of Teribazus and Ariana are brought into the presence of Xerxes, soon after a report had reached the camp, that great part of his navy was shipwrecked. The Persian monarch, quite dispirited, is persuaded by Argestes to send an ambassador to the Spartan king. Argestes himself is deputed, who, after revealing his embassy in secret to Leonidas, is by him led before the whole army, and there receives his answer. Alpheus returns, and declares that the enemy was master of the passages in the hills, and would arrive at Thermopylæ the next morning; upon which Leonidas offers to send away all the troops except his three hundred Spartans; but Diomedon, Demophilus, Dithyrambus and Megistiás refuse to depart: then to relieve the perplexity of Medon on this occasion, he transfers to him the supreme command, dismisses Argestes, orders the companions of his own fate to be ready in arms by sun-set, and retires to his pavilion.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK X.

THE Grecian leaders, from the council ris'n,
Among the troops dispersing, by their words,
Their looks undaunted, warm the coldest heart
Against new dangers threat'ning. To his tent
The Locrian captains Medon swift convenes,
Exhorting thus. 'O long approv'd my friends,
You, who have seen my father in the field
Triumphant, bold assistants of my arm
In labors not inglorious, who this day
Have rais'd fresh trophies, be prepar'd. If help
Be further wanted in the Phocian camp,
You will the next be summon'd. Locris lies
To ravage first expos'd. Your ancient fame,
Your goddesses, your priestess half ador'd,
The daughter of Oileus, from your swords
Protection claim against an impious foe.

All anxious for Melissa, he dismiss'd
Th' applauding vet'rans; to the sacred cave
Then hasten'd. Under heav'n's night-shaded cope
He mused. Melissa in her holy place
How to approach with inauspicious steps,
How to accost his pensive mind revolv'd;
When Mycon, pious vassal of the fane
Descending through the cavern, at the sight
Of Medon stopp'd, and thus. 'Thy presence, lord;
The priestess calls. To Lacedæmon's king
I bear a message, suff'ring no delay.

He quits the chief, whose rapid feet ascend,
 Soon ent'ring, where the pedestal displays
 Thy form, Calliope sublime. The lyre,
 Whose accents immortality confer,
 Thy fingers seem to wake. On either side,
 The snowy gloss of Parian marble shews
 Four of thy sisters through surrounding shade.
 Before each image is a virgin plac'd.
 Before each virgin dimly burns a lamp,
 Whose livid spires just temper with a gleam
 The dread obscurity of night. Apart
 The priestess thoughtful sits. Thus Medon breaks
 The solemn silence. 'Anxious for thy fate
 Without a summons to thy pure abode
 I was approaching. Deities, who know
 The present, pass'd and future, let my lips,
 Unblam'd, have utt'rance. Thou, my sister, hear.
 Thy breast let wisdom strengthen. Impious foes
 Through Oeta now are passing.'—She replies.

'Are passing, brother! They alas! are pass'd,
 Are in possession of the upper Streight.
 Hear in thy turn. A dire narration hear.
 A favor'd goat, conductor of my herd,
 Stray'd to a dale, whose outlet is the post
 To Phocians left, and penetrates to Greece.
 Him Mycon following, by a hostile band,
 Light arm'd, forerunners of a num'rous host,
 Was seiz'd. By fear of menac'd torments forc'd,
 He shew'd a passage up that mountain's side,
 Whose length of wood o'ershades the Phocian land.
 To dry and sapless trunks in diff'rent parts
 Fire, by the Persians artfully apply'd,
 Soon grew to flames. This done, the troop return'd,
 Detaining Mycon. Now the mountain blaz'd.
 The Phocians, ill-commanded, left their post,
 Alarm'd, confus'd. More distant ground they chose.
 In blind delusion forming there, they spread
 Their ineffectual banners to repel

Imagin'd peril from those fraudulent lights,
 By stratagem prepar'd. A real foe
 Meantime secur'd the undefended pass.
 This Mycon saw. Escaping thence to me,
 He by my orders hastens to inform
 Leonidas.' She paus'd. Like one, who sees
 The forked light'ning into shivers rive
 A knotted oak, or crumble tow'rs to dust,
 Aghast was Medon; then, recov'ring, spake:

'Thou boasted glory of th' Oilean house,
 If e'er thy brother bow'd in rev'rence due
 To thy superior virtues, let his voice
 Be now regarded. From th' endanger'd faue,
 My sister, fly. Whatever be my lot,
 A troop select of Locrians shall transport
 Thy sacred person, where thy will ordains.'

'Think not of me,' returns the dame. 'To Greece
 Direct thy zeal. My peasants are conven'd,
 That by their labour, when the fatal hour
 Requires, with massy fragments I may bar
 That cave to human entrance. Best belov'd
 Of brothers, now a serious ear incline.
 Awhile in Greece to fortune's wanton gale
 His golden banner shall the Persian king,
 Deluded, wave. Leonidas, by death
 Preserving Sparta, will his spirit leave
 To blast the glitt'ring pageant. Medon, live
 To share that glory. Thee to perish here
 No law, no oracle enjoins. To die,
 Uncall'd, is blameful. Let thy pious hand
 Secure Oileus from barbarian force.
 To Sparta mindful of her noble host
 Entrust his rev'rend head. Th' assembled hinds,
 Youths, maidens, wives with nurselings at their breasts,
 Around her now in consternation stood,
 The women weeping, mute, aghast the men.
 To them she turns. You never, faithful race,

Your priestess shall forsake. Melissa here;
 Despairing never of the public weal,
 For better days in solitude shall wait,
 Shall cheer your sadness. My prophetic soul
 Sees through time's cloud the liberty of Greece
 More stable, more effulgent. In his blood
 Leonidas cements th' unshaken base
 Of that strong tow'r, which Athens shall exalt
 To cast a shadow o'er the eastern world.'

This utter'd, tow'rd the temple's inmost seat
 Of sanctity her solemn step she bends,
 Devout, enraptur'd. In their dark'ning lamps
 The pallid flames are fainting. Dim through mists
 The morning peeps. An awful silence reigns.
 While Medon pensive from the fane descends,
 But instant reappears. Behind him close
 Treads Melibœus, through the cavern's mouth
 Ascending pale in aspect, not unlike
 What legends tell of spectres, by the force
 Of necromantic sorcery constrain'd;
 Through earths dark bowels, which the spell disjoin'd,
 They from death's mansion in reluctant sloth
 Rose to divulge the secrets of their graves,
 Or mysteries of fate. His cheerful brow,
 O'erclouded, paleness on his healthful cheek,
 A dull, unwonted heaviness of pace
 Portend disast'rous tidings. Medon spake—

'Turn, holy sister. By the gods belov'd,
 May they sustain thee in this mournful hour.
 Our father, good Oileus is no more.
 Behearse thy tidings, swain.' He takes the word.

'Thou wast not present, when his mind, outstretch'd
 By zeal for Greece, transported by his joy
 To entertain Leonidas, refus'd
 Due rest. Old age his ardour had forgot,
 To his last waking moment with his guest

Inrapt'rous talk redundant. He at last,
 Compos'd and smiling in th' embrace of sleep,
 To Pan's protection at the island fane
 Was left. He wak'd no more. The fatal news,
 'To you discover'd, from the chiefs I hide.'

Melissa heard, inclin'd her forehead low
 Before th' insculptur'd deities. A sigh
 Broke from her heart, these accents from her lips—

'He full of days and honors through the gate
 Of painless slumber is retir'd. His tomb
 Shall stand among his fathers in the shade
 Of his own trophies. Placid were his days,
 Which flow'd through blessings. As a river pure,
 Whose sides are flow'ry, and whose meadows fair,
 Meets in his course a subterranean void;
 There dips his silver head, again to rise,
 And, rising, glide through flow'rs and meadows new;
 So shall Oileus in those happier fields,
 Where never tempests roar, nor humid clouds
 In mists dissolve, nor white-descending flakes
 Of winter violate th' eternal green;
 Where never gloom of trouble shades the mind,
 Nor gust of passion heaves the quiet breast,
 Nor dews of grief are sprinkled. Thou art gone,
 Host of divine Leonidas on earth,
 Art gone before him to prepare the feast,
 Immortalizing virtue.' Silent here,
 Around her head she wraps her hallow'd pall.
 Her prudent virgins interpose a hymn,
 Not in a plaintive, but majestic flow,
 To which their fingers, sweeping o'er the chords,
 The lyre's full tone attemper. She unveils,
 Then with a voice, a countenance compos'd—

'Go, Medon, pillar of th' Oilean house.
 New cares, new duties claim thy precious life.
 Perform the pious obsequies. Let tears,

Let groans be absent from the sacred dust,
 Which heav'n in life so favor'd, more in death.
 A term of righteous days, an envy'd urn
 Like his, for Medon is Melissa's pray'r.
 Thou, Melibœus, cordial, high in rank
 Among the prudent, warn and watch thy lord.
 My benediction shall reward thy zeal.'

' Sooth'd by the blessings of such perfect lips,
 They both depart. And now the climbing sun
 To Xerxes' tent discover'd from afar
 The Persian captives with their mournful load.
 Before them rumour through her sable trump
 Breathes lamentation. Horror lends his voice
 To spread the tidings of disastrous fate
 Along Spercheos. As a vapour black,
 Which, from the distant, horizontal verge
 Ascending, nearer still and nearer bends
 To higher lands its progress, there condens'd,
 Throws darkness o'er the valleys, while the face
 Of nature saddens round; so step by step,
 In motion slow th' advancing bier diffus'd
 A solemn sadness o'er the camp. A hedge
 Of trembling spears on either hand is form'd.
 Tears underneath his iron-pointed cone
 The Sacian drops. The Caspian savage feels
 His heart transpierc'd, and wonders at the pain.
 In Xerxes' presence are the bodies plac'd,
 Nor he forbids. His agitated breast
 All might had weigh'd against his future hopes
 His present losses his defeated ranks,
 By myriads thinn'd, their multitude abash'd,
 His fleet thrice worsted, torn by storms, reduc'd
 To half its number. When he slept, in dreams
 He saw the haggard dead, which floated round
 Th' adjoining strands. Disasters new their ghosts
 In sullen frowns, in shrill upbradings bode.
 Thus, ere the gory bier approach'd his eyes,
 He in dejection had already lost

His kingly pride, the parent of disdain,
 And cold indifference to human woes.
 Not ev'n beside his sister's nobler corse
 Her humble lover could awake his scorn.
 The captives told their piercing tale. He heard;
 He felt awhile compassion. But ere long
 Those traces vanish'd from the tyrant's breast.
 His former gloom redoubles. For himself
 His anxious bosom heaves, oppress'd by fear,
 Lest he with all his splendour should be cast
 Apprey to fortune. Thoughtful near the throne
 Laconia's exile waits, to whom the king—

'O Dêmarratus, what will fate ordain?
 Lo! fortune turns against me. What shall check
 Her further malice, when her daring stride
 Invades my house with ravage, and profanes
 The blood of great Darius. I have sent
 From my unguarded side the chosen band,
 My bravest chiefs to pass the desert hill;
 Have to the conduct of a Malian spy
 My hopes entrusted. May not there the Greeks
 In opposition more tremendous still,
 More ruinous, than yester sun beheld,
 Maintain their post invincible, renew
 Their stony thunder in augmented rage,
 And send whole quarries down the craggy steeps
 Again to crush my army? Oh! unfold
 Thy secret thoughts, nor hide the harshest truth.
 Say, what remains to hope? The exile here—

'Too well, O monarch, do thy fears presage,
 What may befall thy army. If the Greeks,
 Arrang'd within Thermopylæ, a pass
 Accessible and practic'd, could repel
 With such destruction their unnumber'd fogs;
 What scenes of havoc may untrodden paths,
 Confin'd among the craggy hills, afford?

Lost in despair, the monarch silent sat.
 Not less unmann'd, than Xerxes, from his place
 Uprose Argestes; but concealing fear,
 These artful words deliver'd—'If the king
 Propitious wills to spare his faithful bands,
 Nor spread at large the terrors of his pow'r;
 More gentle means of conquest, than by arms,
 Nor less secure may artifice supply.
 Renown'd Darius, thy immortal sire
 Bright in the spoil of kingdoms, long in vain
 The fields of proud Euphrates with his host
 O'erspread. At length, confiding in the wiles
 Of Zopyrus, the mighty prince subdu'd
 The Babylonian ramparts. Who shall count
 The thrones and states, by stratagem o'erturn'd?
 But if corruption join her pow'rful aid,
 Not one can stand. What race of men possess
 That probity, that wisdom, which the veil
 Of craft shall never blind, nor proffer'd wealth,
 Nor splendid pow'r seduce? O Xerxes, born
 To more, than mortal greatness, canst thou find
 Through thy unbounded sway no dazzling gift,
 Which may allure Leonidas? Dispel
 The cloud of sadness from those sacred eyes.
 Great monarch, proffer to Laconia's chief,
 What may thy own magnificence declare,
 And win his friendship. O'er his native Greece
 Invest him sov'reign. Thus procure his sword.
 For thy succeeding conquests. Xerxes here,
 As from a trance awak'ning, swift replies.

'Wise are thy dictates. Fly to Sparta's chief.
 Argestes, fall before him. Bid him join
 My arms, and reign o'er ev'ry Grecian state.'

He scarce had finish'd, when in haste approach'd
 Artuchus. Startled at the ghastly stage
 Of death, that guardian of the Persian fair
 Thus in a groan.—'Thou deity malign,

O Arimanius, what a bitter draught
 For my sad lips thy cruelty hath mix'd!
 Is this the flow'r of woman, to my charge
 So lately giv'n? Oh! princess, I have rang'd
 The whole Sperchean valley, woods and caves;
 In quest of thee, found here a lifeless corse.
 Astonishment and horror lock my tongue.'

Pride now, reviving in the monarch's breast;
 Dispell'd his black despondency awhile;
 With gall more black effacing from his heart
 Each merciful impression. Stern he spake.--

'Remove her, satrap, to the female train.
 Let them the due solemnities perform.
 But never she, by Mithra's light, I swear,
 Shall sleep in Susa with her kindred dust;
 Who by ignoble passions hath debas'd
 The blood of Xerxes. Greece beheld her shame;
 Let Greece behold her tomb. The low-born slave,
 Who dar'd to Xerxes' sister lift his hopes,
 On some bare crag expose.' The Spartan here--

'My royal patron, let me speak--and die,
 If such thy will. This cold, disfigur'd clay
 Was late thy soldier, gallantly who fought,
 Who nobly perish'd, long the dearest friend
 Of Hyperanthes, hazarding his life
 Now in thy cause. O'er Persians thou dost reign;
 None more, than Persians, venerate the brave.'

'Well hath he spoke,' Artuchus firm subjoins.
 'But if the king his rigour will inflict
 On this dead warrior--Heav'n, o'erlook the deed,
 Nor on our heads accumulate fresh woes!
 The shatter'd fleet, th' intimidated camp,
 The band select, through Oeta's dang'rous wilds
 At this dread crisis struggling, must obtain
 Support from heav'n, or Asia's glory falls.'

Tell pride, recoiling at these awful words
 In Xerxes' frozen bosom, yields to fear,
 Resuming there the sway. He grants the corse
 To Demaratus. Forth Artuchus moves
 Behind the bier, uplifted by his train.

Argestes, parted from his master's side,
 Ascends a car; and, speeding o'er the beach,
 Sees Artemisia. She the ashes pale
 Of slaughter'd Carians, on the pyre consum'd,
 Was then collecting for the fun'ral vase
 In exclamation thus. 'My subjects, lost
 On earth, descend to happier climes below—
 The fawning, dastard counsellors, who left
 Your worth deserted in the hour of need,
 May kites disfigure, may the wolf devour—
 Shade of my husband, thou salute in smiles
 These gallant warriors, faithful once to thee,
 Nor less to me. They tidings will report
 Of Artemisia to revive thy love—
 May wretches like Argestes never clasp
 Their wives, their offspring! Never greet their homes!
 May their unbury'd limbs dismiss their ghosts
 To wail for ever on the banks of Styx!

Then, turning tow'rd her son. 'Come, virtuous boy.
 Let us transport these reliques of our friends
 To yon tall bark, in pendent sable clad.
 They, if her keel be destin'd to return,
 Shall in paternal monuments repose.
 Let us embark. Till Xerxes shuts his ear
 To false Argestes; in her vessel hid,
 Shall Artemisia's gratitude lament
 Her bounteous sov'reign's fate. Leander, mark.
 The Doric virtues are not eastern plants.
 Them foster still within thy gen'rous breast,
 But keep in covert from the blaze of courts;
 Where flatt'ry's guile in oily words profuse,
 In action tardy, o'er th' ingenious tongue,
 The arm of valour, and the faithful heart

Will ever triumph. Yet my soul enjoys
 Her own presage, that destiny reserves
 An hour for my revenge.' Concluding here,
 She gains the fleet. Argestes sweeps along
 On rapid wheels from Artemisia's view,
 Like Night, protectress foul of heinous deeds,
 With treason, rape and murder at her heel,
 Before the eye of morn retreating swift
 To hide her loathsome visage. Soon he reach'd
 Thermopylæ; descending from his car,
 Was led by Dithyrambus to the tent
 Of Sparta's ruler. Since the fatal news
 By Myeon late deliver'd, he apart
 With Polydorus had consulted long
 On high attempts; and, now sequester'd, sat
 To ruminate on vengeance. At his feet
 Prone fell the satrap, and began. 'The will
 Of Xerxes bends me prostrate to the earth
 Before thy presence. Great and matchless chief,
 Thus says the lord of Asia. Join my arms;
 Thy recompense is Greece. Her fruitful plains,
 Her gen'rous steeds, her flocks, her num'rous towns,
 Her sons I render to thy sov'reign hand.
 And, O illustrious warrior heed my words.
 Think on the bliss of royalty, the pomp
 Of courts, their endless pleasures, trains of slaves,
 Who restless watch for thee, and thy delights:
 Think on the glories of unrivall'd sway.
 Look on th' Ionic, on th' Æolian Greeks.
 From them their phantom liberty is flown;
 While in each province, rais'd by Xerxes' pow'r,
 Some favor'd chief presides; exalted state,
 Ne'er giv'n by envious freedom. On his head
 He bears the gorgeous diadem; he sees
 His equals once in adoration stoop
 Beneath his footstool. What superior beams
 Will from thy temples blaze, when gen'ral Greece,
 In noblest states abounding, calls thee lord,
 Thee only worthy. How will each rejoice

Around thy throne, and hail th' auspicious day,
 When thou, distinguish'd by the Persian king,
 Didst in thy sway consenting nations bless,
 Didst calm the fury of unsparing war,
 Which else had delug'd all with blood and flames.'

Leonidas replies not, but commands
 The Thespian youth, still watchful near the tent,
 To summon all the Grecians. He obeys.
 The king uprises from his seat, and bids
 The Persian follow. He, amaz'd, attends,
 Surrounded soon by each assembling band;
 When thus at length the godlike Spartan spake,

'Here, Persian, tell thy embassy. Repeat,
 That to obtain my friendship Asia's prince
 To me hath proffer'd sov'reignty o'er Greece.
 Then view these bands whose valour shall preserve
 That Greece unconquer'd, which your king bestows;
 Shall strew your bodies on her crimson'd plains:
 The indignation, painted on their looks,
 Their gen'rous scorn may answer for their chief.
 Yet from Leonidas, thou wretch, inur'd
 To vassalage and baseness, hear. The pomp,
 The arts of pleasure in despotic courts
 I spurn abhorrent. In a spotless heart
 I look for pleasure. I from righteous deeds
 Derive my splendour. No adoring croud,
 No purpled slaves, no mercenary spears
 My state embarrass. I in Sparta rule
 By laws my rulers; with a guard unknown
 To Xerxes, public confidence and love.
 No pale suspicion of th'empoison'd bowl,
 Th' assassin's poniard, or provok'd revolt
 Chace from my decent couch the peace, deny'd
 To his resplendent canopy. Thy king,
 Who hath profan'd by proffer'd bribes my ear,
 Dares not to meet my arm. Thee, trembling slave,
 Whose embassy was treason, I despise,
 And therefore spare.' Diomedon subjoins,

'Our marble temples these barbarians waste,
A crime less impious, than a bare attempt
Of sacrilege on virtue. Grant my suit,
Thou living temple, where the goddess dwells.
To me consign the caitiff. Soon the winds
Shall parch his limbs on Oeta's tallest pine.'

Amidst his fury suddenly return'd
The speed of Alpheus. All, suspended, fix'd
On him their eyes, impatient. He began

'I am return'd a messenger of ill.
Close to the passage, op'ning into Greece,
That post committed to the Phocian guard,
O'erhangs a bushy cliff. A station there
Behind the shrubs by dead of night I took,
'Though not in darkness. Purple was the face
Of heav'n. Beneath my feet the valleys glow'd.
A range immense of wood-invested hills,
The boundaries of Greece, were clad in flames;
An act of froward chance, or crafty foes
'To cast dismay. The crackling pines I heard;
Their branches sparkled, and the thickets blaz'd.
In hillocks embers rose. Embod'y'd fire,
As from unnumber'd furnaces, I saw
Mount high through vacant trunks of headless oaks,
Broad bas'd, and dry with age. Barbarian helms,
Shields, javelins, sabres, gleaming from below,
Full soon discover'd to my tortur'd sight
'The straits in Persia's pow'r. The Phocian chief,
Whate'er the cause, relinquishing his post,
Was to a neighb'ring eminence remov'd;
There, by the foe neglected, or contemn'd,
Remain'd in arms, and neither fled, nor fought.
I staid for day spring. Then the Persian mov'd.
'To-morrow's sun will see their numbers here.'

He said no more. Unutterable fear
In silence wraps the list'ning croud,

Aghast, confounded. Silent are the chiefs,
 Who feel no terror; yet in wonder fix'd,
 Thick-wedg'd, inclose Leonidas around,
 Who thus in calmest elocution spake.

'I now behold the oracle fulfill'd.
 Then art thou near, thou glorious, sacred hour,
 Which shalt my country's liberty secure.
 Thrice hail! thou solemn period. Thee the tongues
 Of virtue, fame and freedom shall proclaim,
 Shall celebrate in ages yet unborn.
 Thou godlike offspring of a godlike sire,
 To him my kindest greetings, Medon, bear.
 Farewell, Megistias, holy friend and brave.
 Thou too, experienc'd, venerable chief,
 Demophilus, farewell. Farewell to thee,
 Invincible Diomedon, to thee,
 Unequall'd Dithyrambus, and to all,
 Ye other dauntless warriors, who may claim
 Praise from my lips, and friendship from my heart.
 You after all the wonders, which your swords
 Have here accomplish'd, will enrich your names
 By fresh renown. Your valour must complete,
 What ours begins. Here first th' astonish'd foe
 On dying Spartans shall with terror gaze,
 And tremble, while he conquers. Then, by fate
 Led from his dreadful victory to meet
 United Greece in phalanx o'er the plain,
 By your avenging spears himself shall fall.'

Forth from the assembly strides Plataea's chief.
 'By the twelve gods, enthron'd in heav'n supreme;
 By my fair name, unsully'd yet, I swear,
 Thine eye, Leonidas, shall ne'er behold
 Diomedon forsake thee. First let strength
 Desert my limbs, and fortitude, my heart.
 Did I not face the Marathonian war?
 Have I not seen Thermopylae? What more
 Can fame bestow, which I should wait to share?

Where can I, living, purchase brighter praise,
 Than dying here? What more illustrious tomb
 Can I obtain, than bury'd in the heaps
 Of Persians, fall'n my victims, on this rock
 To lie distinguish'd by a thousand wounds?"

He ended; when Demophilus. 'O king
 Of Lacedæmon, pride of human race,
 Whom none e'er equall'd, but the seed of Jove,
 Thy own forefather, number'd with the gods,
 Lo! I am old. With falt'ring steps I tread
 The prone descent of years. My country claim'd
 My youth, my ripeness. Feeble age but yields
 An empty name of service. What remains
 For me unequal to the winged speed
 Of active hours, which court the swift and young?
 What eligible wish can wisdom form,
 But to die well? Demophilus shall close
 With thee, O hero, on this glorious earth
 His eve of life.' The youth of Thespia next
 Address'd Leonidas. 'O first of Greeks,
 Me too think worthy to attend thy fame
 With this most dear, this venerable man,
 Forever honor'd from my tend'rest age,
 Ev'n till on life's extremity we part:
 Nor too aspiring let my hopes be deem'd;
 Should the Barbarian in his triumph mark
 My youthful limbs among the gory heaps,
 Perhaps remembrance may unnerve his arm
 In future fields of contest with a race,
 To whom the flow'r, the blooming joys of life
 Are less alluring, than a noble death.'

To him his second parent. 'Wilt thou bleed,
 My Dithyrambus? But I here withhold
 All counsel from thee, who art wise, as brave.
 I know thy magnanimity. I read
 Thy gen'rous thoughts. Decided is thy choice;
 Come then, attendants on a godlike shade,

When to th' Elysian ancestry of Greece
 Descends her great protector, we will shew
 To Harmatides an illustrious son,
 And no unworthy brother. We will link
 Our shields together. We will press the ground,
 Still undivided in the arms of death.
 So if th' attentive traveller we draw
 To our cold reliques, wond'ring, shall he trace
 The diff'rent scene, then pregnant with applause,
 O wise old man, exclaim, the hour of fate
 Well didst thou chuse; and, O unequall'd youth,
 Who for thy country didst thy bloom devote,
 May'st thou remain forever dear to fame!
 May time rejoice to name thee! O'er thy urn
 May everlasting peace her pinion spread.'

This said, the hero with his lifted shield
 His face o'ershades; he drops a secret tear:
 Not this a tear of anguish, but deriv'd
 From fond affection, grown mature with time,
 Awak'd a manly tenderness alone,
 Unmix'd with pity, or with vain regret.

A stream of duty, gratitude and love
 Flow'd from the heart of Harmatides' son,
 Addressing straight Leonidas, whose looks
 Declar'd unspeakable applause. 'O king
 Of Lacedæmon, now distribute praise
 From thy accusom'd justice, small to me,
 To him a portion large. His guardian care,
 His kind instruction, his example train'd
 My infancy, my youth. From him I learn'd
 To live, unspotted. Could I less, than learn
 From him to die with honor.' Medon hears.
 Shook by a whirlwind of contending thoughts
 Strong heaves his manly bosom, under awe
 Of wise Melissa, torn by friendship, fir'd
 By such example high. In dubious state
 So rolls a vessel, when th' inflated waves

Her planks assail, and winds her canvass rend;
 The rudder labours, and requires a hand
 Of firm, delib'ratè skill. The gen'rous king
 Perceive's the hero's struggle, and prepares
 To interpose relief; when instant came
 Dieneses before them. Short he spake.

'Barbarian myriads through the secret pass
 Have enter'd Greece. Leonidas, by morn
 Expect them here. My slender force I spar'd.
 There to have died was useless. We return
 With thee to perish. Union of our strength
 Will render more illustrious to ourselves,
 And to the foe more terrible our fall.'

Megistias last accosts Laconia's king.
 'Thou, whom the gods have chosen to exalt
 Above mankind in virtue and renown,
 O call not me presumptuous, who implore
 Among these heroes thy regardful ear.
 To Lacedæmon I a stranger came,
 There found protection. There to honors rais'd,
 I have not yet the benefit repaid.
 That now the gen'rous Spartans may behold
 In me their large beneficence not vain,
 Here to their cause I consecrate my breath.'

'Not so, Megistias,' interpos'd the king.
 'Thou and thy son retire.' Again the seer—

'Forbid it, thou eternally ador'd,
 O Jove, confirm my persevering soul!
 Nor let me these auspicious moments lose,
 When to my bounteous patrons I may show,
 That I deserv'd their favor. Thou, my child,
 Dear Menalippus, heed the king's command,
 And my paternal tenderness revere;
 Thou from these ranks withdraw thee, to my use
 Thy arms surrend'ring. Fortune will supply

New proofs of valor. Vanquish then, or find
 A glorious grave; but spare thy father's eye
 The bitter anguish to behold thy youth
 Untimely bleed before him.' Grief suspends
 His speech, and interchangeably their arms
 Impart the last embraces. Either weeps,
 The hoary parent, and the blooming son.

But from his temples the pontific wreath
 Megistias now unloosens. He resigns
 His hallow'd vestments; while the youth in tears
 The helmet o'er his parent's snowy locks,
 O'er his broad chest adjusts the radiant mail.

Dieneces was nigh. Oppress'd by shame,
 His downcast visage Menalippus hid
 From him, who cheerful thus. 'Thou needst not blush,
 Thou hear'st thy father and the king command,
 What I suggested, thy departure hence.
 Train'd by my care, a soldier thou return'st.
 Go, practice my instructions. Oft in fields
 Of future conflict may thy prowess call
 Me to remembrance. Spare thy words. Farewell.'

While such contempt of life, such fervid zeal
 To die with glory animate the Greeks,
 Far diff'rent thoughts possess Argestes' soul.
 Amaze and mingled terror chill his blood.
 Cold drops, distill'd from ev'ry pore, bedew
 His shiv'ring flesh. His bosom pants. His knees
 Yield to their burden. Ghastly pallid his cheeks,
 Pale are his lips and trembling. Such the minds
 Of slaves corrupt; on them the beauteous face
 Of virtue turns to horror. But these words
 From Lacedæmon's chief the wretch relieve.

'Return to Xerxes Tell him, on this rock
 The Grecians faithful to their trust await
 His chosen myriads. Tell him, thou hast seen,

How far the lust of empire is below
 A freeborn spirit; that my death, which steals
 My country's safety, is indeed a boon,
 His folly gives, a precious boon, which Greece
 Will by perdition to his throne repay.'

He said. The Persian hastens through the pass.
 Once more the stern Diomedon arose.
 Wrath overcast his forehead, while he spake.

'Yet more must stay and bleed. Detested Thebes
 Ne'er shall receive her traitors back. This spot
 Shall see their perfidy aton'd by death,
 Ev'n from that pow'r, to which their abject hearts
 Have sacrific'd their faith. Nor dare to hope,
 Ye vile deserters of the public weal,
 Ye coward slaves, that, mingled in the heaps
 Of gen'rous victims to their country's good,
 You shall your shame conceal. Whoe'r shall pass
 Along the field of glorious slain, and mark
 For veneration ev'ry nobler corse;
 His heart, though warm in rapturous applause,
 Awhile shall curb the transport to repeat
 His execrations o'er such impious heads,
 On whom that fate, to others yielding fame,
 Is infamy and vengeance.' Dreadful thus
 On the pale Thebans sentence he pronounc'd,
 Like Rhadamanthus from th' infernal seat
 Of judgment, which inexorably dooms
 The guilty dead to ever-during pain;
 While Phlegethon his flaming volumes rolls
 Before their sight, and ruthless furies shake
 Their hissing serpents. All the Greeks assent
 In clamors, echoing through the concave rock.
 Forth Anaxander in th' assembly stood,
 Which he address'd with indignation feign'd.

'If yet your clamours, Grecians, are allay'd,
 Lo! I appear before you to demand,

Why these my brave companions, who alone
 Among the Thebans through dissuading crouds
 Their passage forc'd to join your camp, should bear
 The name of traitors? By an exil'd wretch
 We are traduc'd, by Demaratus, driv'n
 From Spartan confines, who hath meanly sought
 Barbarian courts for shelter. Hath he drawn
 Such virtues thence, that Sparta, who before
 Held him unworthy of his native sway,
 Should trust him now, and doubt auxiliar friends?
 Injurious men! We scorn the thoughts of flight.
 Let Asia bring her numbers; unconstrain'd,
 We will confront them, and for Greece expire.

Thus in the garb of virtue he adorn'd
 Necessity. Laconia's king perceiv'd
 Through all its fair disguise the traitor's heart.
 So, when at first mankind in science rude
 Rever'd the moon, as bright in native beams,
 Some sage, who walk'd with nature through her works,
 By wisdom led, discern'd the various orb,
 Dark in itself, in foreign splendours clad.

Leonidas concludes. 'Ye Spartans, hear;
 Hear you, O Grecians, in our lot by choice
 Partakers, destin'd to enroll your names
 In time's eternal record, and enhance
 Your country's lustre: lo! the noontide blaze
 Inflames the broad horizon. Each retire;
 Each in his tent invoke the pow'r of sleep
 To brace his vigour, to enlarge his strength
 For long endurance. When the sun descends,
 Let each appear in arms. You, brave allies
 Of Corinth, Phlius, and Mycenæ's tow'rs,
 Arcadians, Locrians, must not yet depart.
 While we repose, embattled wait. Retreat,
 When we our tents abandon. I resign
 To great Oileus' son supreme command.
 Take my embraces, Æschylus. The fleet
 Expects thee. To Themistocles report,

What thou hast seen and heard. O thrice farewell!
 Th' Athenian answer'd. To yourselves, my friends,
 Your virtues immortality secure,
 Your bright examples victory to Greece.'

Retaining these injunctions, all dispers'd;
 While in his tent Leonidas remain'd
 Apart with Agis, whom he thus bespake.
 'Yet in our fall the pond'rous hand of Greece
 Shall Asia feel. This Persian's welcome tale
 Of us, inextricably doom'd her prey,
 As by the force of sorcery will wrap
 Security around her, will suppress
 All sense, all thought of danger. Brother, know,
 That soon, as Cynthia from the vault of heav'n
 Withdraws her shining lamp, through Asia's host
 Shall massacre and desolation rage.
 Yet not to base associates will I trust
 My vast design. Their perfidy might warn
 The unsuspecting foe, our fairest fruits
 Of glory thus be wither'd. Ere we move,
 While on the solemn sacrifice intent,
 As Lacedæmon's ancient laws ordain,
 Our pray'rs we offer to the tuneful nine,
 Thou whisper through the willing ranks of Thebes
 Slow and in silence to disperse and fly.'

Now left by Agis, on his couch reclin'd,
 The Spartan king thus meditates alone.

'My fate is now impending. O my soul,
 What more auspicious period couldst thou chuse
 For death, than now, when, beating high in joy,
 Thou tell'st me. I am happy? If to live,
 Or die, as virtue dictates, be to know
 The purest bliss; if she her charms displays
 Still lovely, still unfading, still serene
 To youth, to age, to death: whatever be
 Those other climes of happiness unchang'd,
 Which heav'n in dark futurity conceals,

Still here, O virtue, thou art all our good.
 Oh! what a black, unspeakable reverse
 Must the unrighteous, must the tyrant prove?
 What in the struggle of departing day,
 When life's last glimpse, extinguishing, presents
 Unknown, inextricable gloom? But how
 Can I explain the terrors of a breast,
 Where guilt resides? Leonidas, forego
 The horrible conception. and again
 Within thy own felicity retire;
 Bow grateful down to him, who form'd thy mind,
 Offerimes unfruitful, never to admit
 The black impression of a guilty thought.
 Else could I fearless by deliberate choice
 Relinquish life. This calm from minds deprav'd
 Is ever absent. Oft in them the force
 Of some prevailing passion for a time
 Suppresses fear. Precipitate they lose
 The sense of danger; when dominion, wealth,
 Or purpled pomp enchant the dazzled sight,
 Pursuing still the joys of life alone.

'But he, who calmly seeks a certain death,
 When duty only, and the gen'ral good
 Direct his courage, must a soul possess,
 Which, all content deducing from itself,
 Can by unerring virtue's constant light
 Discern, when death is worthy of his choice.

'The man, thus great and happy, in the scope
 Of his large mind is stretch'd beyond his date.
 Ev'n on this shore of being he in thought,
 Supremely bless'd, anticipates the good,
 Which late posterity from him derives.'

At length the hero's meditations close.
 The swelling transport of his heart subsides
 In soft oblivion; and the silken plumes
 Of sleep envelope his extended limbs.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK XI.

THE ARGUMENT.

Leonidas, rising before sun-set, dismisses the forces under the command of Medon; but observing a reluctance in him to depart, reminds him of his duty, and gives him an affectionate farewell. He then relates to his own select band a dream, which is interpreted by Megistias, arms himself, and marches in procession with his whole troop to an altar, newly raised on a neighbouring meadow; there offers a sacrifice to the muses; he invokes the assistance of those goddesses; he animates his companions; then, placing himself at their head, leads them against the enemy in the dead of the night.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK XI.

THE day was closing. Agis left his tent.
He sought his god-like brother. Him he found
Stretch'd o'er his tranquil couch. His looks retain'd
The cheerful tincture of his waking thoughts
To gladden sleep. So smile soft evening skies,
Yet streak'd with ruddy light, when summer's suns
Have veil'd their beaming foreheads. Transport fill'd
The eye of Agis. Friendship swell'd his heart.
His yielding knee in veneration bent.
The hero's hand he kiss'd, then fervent thus.

'O excellence ineffable, receive
This secret homage; and may gentle sleep
Yet longer seal thine eyelids, that, unblam'd,
I may fall down before thee.' He concludes
In adoration of his friend divine,
Whose brow the shades of slumber now forsake.
So, when the rising sun resumes his state,
Some white-rob'd magus on Euphrates side,
Or Indian seer on Ganges prostrate falls
Before th' emerging glory, to salute
That radiant emblem of th' immortal mind.

Uprise both heroes. From their tents in arms
Appear the bands elect. The other Greeks
Are filing homeward. Only Medon stops.
Melissa's dictates he forgets awhile.
All inattentive to the warning voice
Of Melibœus, earnest he surveys
Leonidas. Such constancy of zeal
In good Oileus' offspring brings the sire

To full remembrance in that solemn hour,
And draws these cordial accents from the king.

‘Approach me, Locrian. In thy look I trace
Consummate faith and love. But, vers’d in arms,
Against thy gen’ral’s orders wouldst thou stay?
Go, prove to kind Oileus, that my heart
Of him was mindful, when the gates of death
I barr’d against his son. Yon gallant Greeks,
To thy commanding care from mine transfer’d,
Remove from certain slaughter. Last repair
To Lacedæmon. Thither lead thy sire.
Say to her senate, to her people tell,
Here didst thou leave their countrymen and king
On death resolv’d, obedient to the laws.

The Locrian chief, restraining tears, replies—
‘My sire, left slumb’ring in the island-fane;
Awoke no more’—‘Then joyful I shall meet
Him soon,’ the king made answer.—‘Let thy worth
Supply thy father’s. Virtue bids me die,
Thee live. Farewell.’ Now Medon’s grief, o’eraw’d
By wisdom, leaves his long-suspended mind
To firm decision. He departs, prepar’d
For all the duties of a man, by deeds
To prove himself the friend of Sparta’s king,
Melissa’s brother, and Oileus’ son.

‘The gen’rous victims of the public weal,
Assembled now, Leonidas salutes,
His pregnant soul disburd’ning—‘O thrice hail!
Surround me, Grecians; to my words attend.
This evening’s sleep no sooner press’d my brows,
Than o’er my head the empyreal form
Of heav’n-enthron’d Alcides was display’d.
I saw his magnitude divine. His voice
I heard, his solemn mandate to arise.
I rose. He bade me follow. I obey’d.
A mountain’s summit, clear’d from mist, or cloud,

We reach'd in silence. Suddenly the howl
 Of wolves and dogs, the vulture's piercing shriek,
 The yell of ev'ry beast and bird of prey
 Discordant grated on my ear. I turn'd.
 A surface hideous, delug'd o'er with blood,
 Beyond my view illimitably stretch'd,
 One vast expanse of horror. There supine,
 Of huge dimension, cov'ring half the plain,
 A giant corse lay mangled, red with wounds,
 Delv'd in th' enormous flesh, which, bubbling, fed
 Ten thousand, thousand grisly beaks and jaws,
 Insatiably devouring. Mute I gaz'd;
 When from behind I heard a second sound
 Like furies, tumbling o'er a craggy shore.
 Again I turn'd. An ocean there appear'd
 With riven keels and shrouds, with shiver'd oars,
 With arms and weltring carcasses bestrewn
 Innumerable. The billows foam'd in blood.
 But where the waters, unobserv'd before,
 Between two adverse shores, contracting, roll'd
 A stormy current, on the beach forlorn
 One of majestic stature I descri'd
 In ornaments imperial. Oft he bent
 On me his clouded eyeballs. Oft my name
 He sounded forth in execrations loud;
 Then rent his splendid garments; then his head
 In rage divested of its graceful hairs.
 Impatient now he ey'd a slender skiff
 Which, mounted high on boist'rous waves approach'd.
 With indignation, with reluctant grief
 Once more his sight reverting, he embark'd
 Amid the perils of the frowning deep.
 O thou, by glorious actions rank'd in heav'n,
 I here exclaim'd, instruct me. What produc'd
 This desolation? Hercules reply'd.
 Let thy astonish'd eye again survey
 The scene, thy soul abhorr'd. I look'd. I saw
 A land, where plenty with disporting hands
 Pour'd all the fruits of Amalthea's horns;

Where bloom'd the olive; where the clustring vine
 With her broad foliage mantled ev'ry hill;
 Where Ceres with exuberance enrob'd
 The pregnant bosoms of the fields in gold;
 Where spacious towns, whose circuits proud contain'd
 The dazzling works of wealth along the banks
 Of copious rivers shew'd their stately tow'rs,
 The strength and splendour of the peopled land.
 Then in a moment clouds obscur'd my view;
 At once all vanish'd from my waking eyes.

Thrice I salute the omen, loud began
 The sage Megistias. In this mystic dream
 I see my country's victories. The land,
 The deep shall own her triumphs; while the tears
 Of Asia and of Libya shall deplore
 Their offspring, cast before the vulture's beak,
 And ev'ry monstrous native of the main.
 Those joyous fields of plenty picture Greece,
 Enrich'd by conquest, and Barbarian spoils.
 He, whom thou saw'st, in regal vesture clad,
 Print on the sand his solitary step,
 Is Xerxes, foil'd and fugitive.' So spake
 The rev'rend augur. Ev'ry bosom felt
 Enthusiastic rapture, joy beyond
 All sense, and all conception, but of those,
 Who die to save their country. Here again
 Th' exulting band Leonidas address'd.

'Since happiness from virtue is deriv'd,
 Who for his country dies, that moment proves
 Most happy, as most virtuous. Such our lot.
 But go, Megistias. Instantly prepare
 The sacred fuel and the victim due;
 That to the muses (so by Sparta's law
 We are enjoin'd) our off'rings may be paid,
 Before we march. Remember, from the rites
 Let ev'ry sound be absent; not the fife,
 Not ev'n the music-breathing flute be heard.

Meantime, ye leaders, ev'ry band instruct
 To move in silence. Mindful of their charge
 The chiefs depart. Leonidas provides
 His various armour. Agis close attends,
 His best assistant. First a breastplate arms
 The spacious chest. O'er this the hero spreads
 The mailed cuirass, from his shoulders hung.
 A shining belt infolds his mighty loins.
 Next on his stately temples he erects
 The plumed helm; then grasps his pond'rous shield.
 Where nigh the center on projecting brass
 Th' inimitable artist had emboss'd
 The shape of great Alcides; whom to gain
 Two goddessess contended. Pleasure here
 Won by soft wiles th' attracted eye; and there
 The form of Virtue dignify'd the scene.
 In her majestic sweetness was display'd
 The mind sublime and happy. From her lips
 Seem'd eloquence to flow. In look serene,
 But fix'd intensely on the son of Jove,
 She wav'd her hand, where, winding to the skies,
 Her paths ascended. On the summit stood,
 Supported by a trophy near to heav'n,
 Fame, and protended her eternal trump.
 The youth attentive to her wisdom own'd
 The prevalence of Virtue; while his eye,
 Fill'd by that spirit, which redeem'd the world
 From tyranny and monsters, darted flames;
 Not undescri'd by Pleasure, where she lay
 Beneath a gorgeous canopy. Around
 Were flow'rets strewn, and wantonly in rills
 A fount mæander'd. All relax'd her limbs;
 Nor wanting yet solicitude to gain,
 What lost she fear'd, as struggling with despair,
 She seem'd collecting ev'ry pow'r to charm:
 Excess of sweet allurements she diffus'd
 In vain. Still Virtue sway'd Alcides' mind.
 Hence all his labours. Wrought with vary'd art,
 The shield's external surface they enrich'd,

This portraiture of glory on his arm
 Leonidas displays, and, tow'ring, strides
 From his pavilion. Ready are the bands.
 The chiefs assume their station. Torches blaze
 Through ev'ry file. All now in silent pace
 To join in solemn sacrifice proceed.
 First Polydorus bears the hallow'd knife,
 The sacred salt and barley. At his side
 Diomedon sustains a weighty mace.
 The priest, Megistias, follows like the rest
 In polish'd armour. White, as winter's fleece,
 A fillet round his shining helm reveals
 The sacerdotal honors. By the horns,
 Where laurels twine, with Alpheus Maron leads
 The consecrated ox. And lo! behind,
 Leonidas advances. Never he
 In such transcendent majesty was seen,
 And his own virtue never so enjoy'd.
 Successive move Dieneces the brave,
 In hoary state Demophilus, the bloom
 Of Dithyrambus, glowing in the hope
 Of future praise, the gen'rous Agis next
 Serene and graceful, last the Theban chiefs,
 Repining, ignominious: then slow march
 The troops all mute, nor shake their brazen arms.

Not from Thermopylæ remote the hills
 Of Oeta, yielding to a fruitful dale,
 Within their side. half-circling, had inclos'd
 A fair expanse in verdure smooth. The bounds
 Were edg'd by wood, o'erlook'd by snowy cliffs,
 Which from the clouds bent frowning. Down a rock
 Above the loftiest summit of the grove
 A tumbling torrent wore the shagged stone;
 Then, gleaming through the intervals of shade,
 Attain'd the valley, where the level stream
 Diffus'd refreshment. On its banks the Greeks
 Had rais'd a rustic altar, fram'd of turf.
 Broad was the surface, high in piles of wood,

All interspers'd with laurel. Purer deem'd,
 Than river, lake, or fountain, in a vase
 Old Ocean's briny element was plac'd
 Before the altar; and of wine unmix'd
 Capacious goblets stood. Megistias now
 His helm unloosen'd. With his snowy head,
 Uncover'd, round the solemn pile he trod.
 He shook a branch of laurel, scatt'ring wide
 The sacred moisture of the main. His hand
 Next on the altar, on the victim strew'd
 The mingled salt and barley. O'er the horns
 Th' inverted chalice, foaming from the grape,
 Discharg'd a rich libation. Then approach'd
 Diomedon. Megistias gave the sign.
 Down sunk the victim by a deathful stroke,
 Nor groan'd. The augur bury'd in the throat
 His hallow'd steel. A purple current flow'd.
 Now smok'd the structure, now it flam'd abroad
 In sudden splendour. Deep in circling ranks
 The Grecians press'd. Each held a sparkling brand;
 The beaming lances intermix'd; the helms,
 The burnish'd armour multiply'd the blaze.
 Leonidas drew nigh. Before the pile
 His feet he planted. From his brows remov'd,
 The casque to Agis he consign'd; his shield,
 His spear to Dithyrambus; then, his arms
 Extending, forth in supplication broke—

'Harmonious daughters of Olympian Jove,
 Who, on the top of Helicon ador'd,
 And high Parnassus, with delighted ears
 Bend to the warble of Castalia's stream,
 Or Aganippe's murmur, if from thence
 We must invoke your presence; or along
 The neighb'ring mountains with propitious steps
 If now you grace your consecrated bow'rs,
 Look down, ye Muses; nor disdain to stand
 Each an immortal witness of our fate.
 But with you bring fair Liberty, whom Jove;

And you most honor. Let her sacred eyes
 Approve her dying Grecians; let her voice
 In exultation tell the earth and heav'ns,
 These are her sons Then strike your tuneful shells.
 Record us guardians of our parent's age,
 Our matron's virtue, and our children's bloom,
 The glorious bulwarks of our country's laws,
 Who shall ennoble the historian's page,
 Shall on the joyous festival inspire
 With loftier strains the virgin's choral song.
 Then, O celestial maids, on yonder camp
 Let night sit heavy. Let a sleep like death
 Weigh down the eye of Asia. O infuse
 A cool, untroubled spirit in our breasts,
 Which may in silence guide our daring feet,
 Control our fury, nor by tumult wild
 The friendly dark affright; till dying groans
 Of slaughter'd tyrants into horror wake
 The midnight calm. Then turn destruction loose.
 Let terror, let confusion rage around,
 In one vast ruin heap the barb'rous ranks,
 Their horse, their chariots. Let the spurning steed
 Imbrue his hoofs in blood, the shatter'd cars
 Crush with their brazen weight the prostrate necks
 Of chiefs and kings, encircled, as they fall,
 By nations slain. You, countrymen and friends,
 My last commands retain. Your gen'ral's voice
 Once more salutes you, not to rouse the brave,
 Or minds, resolv'd and dauntless, to confirm.
 Too well by this expiring blaze I see
 Impatient valour flash from ev'ry eye.
 O temper well that ardour, and your lips
 Close on the rising transport. Mark, how sleep
 Hath folded millions in his black embrace.
 No sound is wafted from th' unnumber'd foe.
 The winds themselves are silent. All conspires
 To this great sacrifice, where thousands soon
 Shall only wake to die. Their crowded train
 This night perhaps to Pluto's dreary shades

Ev'n Xerxes' ghost may lead, unless reserv'd
 From this destruction to lament a doom
 Of more disgrace, when Greece confounds that pow'r,
 Which we will shake. But look the setting moon
 Shuts on our darksome paths her waning horns.
 Let each his head distinguish by a wreath
 Of well-earn'd laurel. Then the victim share,
 Then crown the goblet. Take your last repast;
 With your forefathers, and the heroes old
 You next will banquet in the bless'd abodes.'

Here ends their leader. Through th' encircling croud
 The agitation of their spears denotes
 High ardour. So the spiry growth of pines
 Is rock'd, when Æolus in eddies winds
 Among their stately trunks on Pelion's brow.
 The Acarnanian seer distributes swift
 The sacred laurel. Snatch'd in eager zeal
 Around each helm the woven leaves unite
 Their glossy verdure to the floating plumes.
 Then is the victim portion'd. In the bowl
 Then flows the vine's empurpled stream. Aloof
 The Theban train in wan dejection mute
 Brood o'er their shame, or cast affrighted looks
 On that determin'd courage, which, unmov'd
 At fate's approach, with cheerful lips could taste
 The sparkling goblet, could in joy partake
 The last, that glorious banquet. Ev'n the heart
 Of Anaxander had forgot its wiles,
 Dissembling fear no longer. Agis here,
 Remindful ever of the king's command,
 Accosts the Theban chiefs in whispers thus—

'Leonidas permits you to retire.
 While on the rites of sacrifice employ'd,
 None heed your motions. Separate and fly
 In silent pace.' This heard, th' inglorious troop
 Their files dissolving, from the rest withdraw.
 Unseen they moulder from the host like snow,

Freed from the rigour of constraining frost;
 Soon as the sun exerts his orient beam,
 'The transitory landscape melts in rills
 Away, and structures, which delude the eye,
 Insensibly are lost. 'The solemn feast
 Was now concluded. Now Laconia's king
 Had reassum'd his arms. Before his step
 'The croud roll backward. In their gladden'd sight
 His crest, illumin'd by uplifted brands,
 Its purple splendour shakes. 'The tow'ring oak
 'Thus from a lofty promontory waves
 His majesty of verdure. As with joy
 The sailors mark his heav'n-ascending pride,
 Which from afar directs their foamy course
 Along the pathless ocean; so the Greeks
 In transport gaze, as down their op'ning ranks
 'The king proceeds: from whose superior frame
 A soul like thine, O Phidias, might conceive
 In Parian marble, or effulgent brass
 The form of great Apollo; when the god,
 Won by the pray'rs of man's afflicted race,
 In arms forsook his lucid throne to pierce
 The monster Python in the Delphian vale.
 Close by the hero Polydorus waits
 To guide destruction through the Asian tents.
 As the young eagle near his parent's side
 In wanton flight essays his vig'rous wing,
 Ere long with her to penetrate the clouds,
 To dart impetuous on the fleecy train;
 And dye his beak in gore; by Sparta's king
 'The injur'd Polydorus thus prepares
 His arm for death. He feasts his angry soul
 On promis'd vengeance. His impatient thoughts
 Ev'n now transport him furious to the seat
 Of his long sorrows, not with fetter'd hands,
 But now once more a Spartan with his spear,
 His shield restor'd, to lead his country's bands,
 And with them devastation. Nor the rest
 Neglect to form. Thick-rang'd, the helmets blend

Their various plumes, as intermingling oaks
 Combine their foliage in Dodona's grove;
 Or as the cedars on the Syrian hills
 Their shady texture spread. Once more the king,
 O'er all the phalanx his consid'rate view
 Extending, through the ruddy gleam descries
 One face of gladness; but the godlike van
 He most contemplates: Agis, Alpheus there,
 Megistias, Maron with Plataea's chief,
 Dieneces, Demophilus are seen
 With Thespia's youth: nor they their steady sight
 From his remove, in speechless transport bound
 By love, by veneration; till they hear
 His last injunction. To their diff'rent posts
 They sep'rate. Instant on the dewy turf
 Are cast th' extinguish'd brands. On all around
 Drops sudden darkness, on the wood, the hill,
 The snowy ridge, the vale, the silver stream.
 It verg'd on midnight. Tow'rd the hostile camp
 In march compos'd and silent down the pass
 The phalanx mov'd. Each patient bosom hush'd
 Its struggling spirit, nor in whispers breath'd
 The rapt'rous ardour, virtue then inspir'd.
 So louring clouds along th' etherial void
 In slow expansion from the gloomy north
 Awhile suspend their horrors, destin'd soon
 To blaze in lightnings, and to burst in storms.



LEONIDAS.

BOOK XII.

THE ARGUMENT.

Leonidas and the Grecians penetrate through the Persian camp to the very pavilion of Xerxes, who avoids destruction by flight. The Barbarians are slaughtered in great multitudes, and their camp is set on fire. Leonidas conducts his men in good order back to Thermopylæ, engages the Persians, who were descended from the hills, and after numberless proofs of superior strength and valor, sinks down covered with wounds, and expires the last of all the Grecian commanders.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK XII.

A CROSS th' unguarded bound of Asia's camp
Slow pass the Grecians. Through innum'rous tents,
Where all is mute and tranquil, they pursue
Their march sedate. Beneath the leaden hand
Of sleep lie millions motionless and deaf,
Nor dream of fate's approach. Their wary foes,
By Polydorus guided, still proceed.
Ev'n to the centre of th' extensive host
They pierce unseen; when lo! th' imperial tent
Yet distant rose before them. Spreading round
Th' august pavilion, was an ample space
For thousands in arrangement. Here a band
Of chosen Persians, watchful o'er the king,
Held their nocturnal station. As the hearts
Of anxious nations, whom th' unsparing sword,
Or famine threaten, tremble at the sight
Of fear-engender'd phantoms in the sky,
Aerial hosts amid the clouds array'd,
Portending woe and death; the Persian guard
In equal consternation now deserv'd
The glimpse of hostile armour. All disband
As if auxiliar to his favor'd Greeks
Pan held their banner, scatt'ring from its folds
Fear and confusion, which to Xerxes couch,
Swift-winged, fly; thence shake the gen'ral camp,
Whose numbers issue naked, pale, unarm'd,
Wild in amazement, blinded by dismay,
To ev'ry foe obnoxious. In the breasts
Of thousands, gor'd at once, the Grecian steel
Reeks in destruction. Deluges of blood
Float o'er the field, and foam around the heaps
Of wretches, slain unconscious of the hand,

Which wastes their helpless multitude. Amaze,
 Affright, distraction, from his pillow chace
 The lord of Asia, who in thought beholds
 United Greece in arms. Thy lust of pow'r!
 Thy hope of glory! whither are they flown
 With all thy pomp? In this disast'rons hour
 What could avail th' immeasurable range
 Of thy proud camp, save only to conceal
 Thy trembling steps, O Xerxes, while thou fly'st?
 To thy deserted couch with other looks
 With other steps Leonidas is nigh.
 Before him terror strides. Gigantic death,
 And desolation at his side attend.

The vast pavillion's empty space, where lamps
 Of gold shed light and odours, now admits
 The hero. Ardent throngs behind him press,
 But miss their victim. To the ground are hurl'd
 The glitt'ring ensigns of imperial state.
 The diadem, the sceptre, late ador'd
 Through boundless kingdoms, underneath their feet
 In mingled rage and scorn the warriors crush
 A sacrifice to freedom. They return.
 Again to form. Leonidas exalts,
 For new destruction his resistless spear;
 When double darkness suddenly descends.
 The clouds, condensing, intercept the stars
 Black o'er the furrow'd main the raging east
 In whirlwinds sweeps the surge. The coasts resound,
 The cavern'd rocks, the crashing forests roar
 Swift through the camp the hurricane impells
 Its rude career; when Asia's numbers, veil'd
 Amid the shelt'ring horrors of the storm,
 Evade the victor's lance. The Grecians halt;
 While to their gen'ral's pregnant mind occurs
 A new attempt and vast. Perpetual fire
 Beside the tent of Xerxes from the hour,
 He lodg'd his standards on the Malian plains,
 Had shone. Among his Magi to adore

Great Horomazes was the monarch wont
 Before the sacred light. Huge piles of wood
 Lay nigh, prepar'd to feed the constant flame.
 On living embers these are cast. So wills
 Leonidas. The phalanx then divides.
 Four troops are form'd, by Dithyrambus led,
 By Alpheus, by Diomedon. The last
 Himself conducts. The word is giv'n. They seize
 The burning fuel. Sparkling in the wind,
 Destructive fire is brandish'd. All, enjoin'd
 To reassemble at the regal tent,
 By various paths the hostile camp invade.

Now devastation, unconfin'd, involves
 The Malian fields. Among Barbarian tents
 From diff'rent stations fly consuming flames.
 The Greeks afford no respite; and the storm
 Exasperates the blaze. To ev'ry part
 The conflagration like a sea expands,
 One waving surface of unbounded fire.
 In ruddy volumes mount the curling flames
 To heav'n's dark vault, and paint the midnight clouds.
 So, when the north emits his purpled lights,
 The undulated radiance, streaming wide,
 As with a burning canopy invests
 Th' etherial concave. Oeta now disclos'd
 His forehead glitt'ring in eternal frost;
 While down his rocks the foamy torrents shone.
 Far o'er the main the pointed rays were thrown;
 Night snatch'd her mantle from the ocean's breast;
 The billows glimmer'd from the distant shores.

But lo! a pillar huge of smoke ascends,
 Which overshades the field. There horror, there
 Leonidas presides. Command he gave
 To Polydorus, who, exulting, shew'd,
 Where Asia's horse, and warlike cars possess'd
 A crouded station. At the hero's nod
 Devouring Vulcan riots on the stores

Of Ceres, empty'd of the ripen'd grain,
 On all the tribute from her meadows brown,
 By rich Thessalia render'd to the scythe.
 A flood of fire envelopes all the ground.
 The cordage bursts around the blazing tents.
 Down sink the roofs on suffocated throngs,
 Close-wedg'd by fear. The Libyan chariot burns.
 Th' Arabian camel, and the Persian steed
 Bound through a burning deluge. Wild with pain
 They shake their singed manes. Their madding hoofs
 Dash through the blood of thousands, mix'd with flame
 Which rage, augmented by the whirlwind's blast,

Meantime the scepter'd lord of half the globe
 From tent to tent precipitates his flight.
 Dispers'd are all his satraps. Pride herself
 Shuns his dejected brow. Despair alone
 Waits on th' imperial fugitive; and shews,
 As round the camp his eye, distracted, roves,
 No limits to destruction. Now is seen
 Aurora, mounting from her eastern hill
 In rosy sandals, and with dewy locks.
 The winds subside before her; darkness flies;
 A stream of light proclaims the cheerful day,
 Which sees at Xerxes' tent the conqu'ring bands,
 All reunited. What could fortune more
 To aid the valiant, what to gorge revenge?
 Lo! desolation o'er the adverse host
 Hath empty'd all her terrors. Ev'n the hand
 Of languid slaughter dropt the crimson steele;
 Nor nature longer can sustain the toil
 Of unremitted conquest. Yet what pow'r
 Among these sons of liberty reviv'd
 Their drooping warmth, new-strung their nerves, recal
 Their weary'd swords to deeds of brighter fame?
 What, but th' inspiring hope of glorious death
 To crown their labours, and th' auspicious look
 Of their heroic chief, which, still unchang'd,
 Still in superior majesty declar'd,

No toil had yet relax'd his matchless strength;
Nor worn the vigour of his godlike soul.

Back to the pass in gentle march he leads
Th' embattled warriors. They behind the shrubs,
Where Medon sent such numbers to the shades,
In ambush lie. The tempest is o'erblown.
Soft breezes only from the Malian wave
O'er each grim face, besmear'd with smoke and gore,
Their cool refreshment breathe. The healing gale,
A crystal rill near Oeta's verdant feet
Dispel the langour from their harass'd nerves,
Fresh brac'd by strength returning. O'er their heads
Lo! in full blaze of majesty appears
Melissa, bearing in her hand divine
The eternal guardian of illustrious deeds
The sweet Phœbean lyre. Her graceful train
Of white-rob'd virgins, seated on a range
Half down the cliff, o'ershadowing the Greeks,
All with concordant strings, and accents clear
A torrent pour of melody, and swell
A high, triumphal, solemn dirge of praise,
Anticipating fame. Of endless joys
In bless'd Elysium was the song. Go, meet
Lycurgus, Solon and Zaleucus sage,
Let them salute the children of their laws.
Meet Homer, Orpheus and th' Ascræan bard,
Who with a spirit, by ambrosial food
Refin'd, and more exalted, shall contend
Your splendid fate to warble through the bow'rs
Of amaranth and myrtle, ever young,
Like your renown. Your ashes we will cull.
In yonder fane deposited, your urns
Dear to the muses shall our lays inspire.
Whatever off'rings, genius, science, art
Can dedicate to virtue, shall be yours,
The gifts of all the Muses, to transmit
You on th' enliven'd canvas, marble, brass,
In wisdom's volume, in the poet's song,

In ev'ry tongue, through ev'ry age and clime,
 You of this earth the brightest flow'rs, not cropt;
 Transplanted only to immortal bloom
 Of praise with men, of happiness with gods.

The Grecian valor on religion's flame
 To ecstasy is wafted. Death is nigh.
 As by the Graces fashion'd, he appears
 A beauteous form. His adamant gate
 Is half unfolded All in transport catch
 A glimpse of immortality. Elate
 In rapturous delusion they believe,
 That to behold and solemnize their fate
 The goddesses are present on the hills
 With celebrating lyres. In thought serene
 Leonidas the kind deception bless'd,
 Nor undeceiv'd his soldiers. After all
 Th' incessant labours of the horrid night
 Through blood, through flames continu'd, he prepares
 In order'd battle to confront the pow'rs
 Of Hyperanthes from the upper straits.

Not long the Greeks in expectation wait
 Impatient. Sudden with tumultuous shouts
 Like Nile's rude current, wherein deafening roar
 Prone from the steep of Elephantis falls
 A sea of waters, Hyperanthes pours
 His chosen numbers on the Grecian camp
 Down from the hills precipitant. No foes
 He finds. The Thebans join him. In his van
 They march conductors. On, the Persians roll
 In martial thunder through the sounding pass.
 They issue forth impetuous from its mouth.
 That moment Sparta's leader gave the sign;
 When, as the impulse ran in forceful sway
 O'erturns a nodding rampart from its base,
 And strews a town with ruin, so the band
 Of serry'd heroes down the Malian steep,
 Tremenduous depth, the mix'd battalions sweep†

Of Thebes and Persia. There no waters flow'd.
 Abrupt and naked all was rock beneath.
 Leonidas, incens'd, with grappling strength
 Dash'd Anaxander on a pointed crag;
 Compos'd, then gave new orders. At the word
 His phalanx, wheeling, penetrates the pass
 Astonish'd Persia stops in full career.
 Ev'n Hyperanthes shrinks in wonder back.
 Confusion drives fresh numbers from the shore
 The Malian ooze overwhelms them. Sparta's king
 Still presses forward, till an open breadth
 Of fifty paces yields his front extent
 To profer battle. Hyperanthes soon
 Recalls his warriors, dissipates their fears.
 Swift on the great Leonidas a cloud
 Of darts is show'r'd. Th' encount'ring armies close.

Who first, sublimest hero, felt thy arm?
 What rivers heard along their echoing banks
 Thy name, in curses sounded from the lips
 Of noble mothers, wailing for their sons?
 What towns with empty monuments were fill'd
 For those, whom thy unconquerable sword
 This day to vultures cast? First Bessus died,
 A haughty satrap, whose tyrannic sway
 Despoil'd Hyrcania of her golden sheaves,
 And laid her forests waste. For him the bees
 Among the branches interwove their sweets;
 For him the fig was ripen'd, and the vine
 In rich profusion o'er the goblet foam'd
 Then Dinis bled. On Hermus' side he reign'd;
 He long assiduous, unavailing woo'd
 The martial queen of Caria. She disdain'd
 A lover's soft complaint. Her rigid ear
 Was fram'd to watch the tempest, while it rag'd,
 Her eye accustom'd on the rolling deck
 To brave the turgid billow. Near the shore
 She now is present in her pinnace light.
 The spectacle of glory crouds her breast

With diff'rent passions. Valiant, she applauds
 The Grecian valor; faithful, she laments
 Her sad presage of Persia prompts her son
 To emulation of the Greeks in arms,
 And of herself in loyalty. By fate
 Is she reserv'd to signalize that day
 Of future shame when Xerxes must behold
 The blood of nations overflow his decks,
 And to their bottom tinge the briny floods
 Of Salamis; whence she with Asia flies,
 She only not inglorious. Low reclines
 Her lover now, on Hermus to repeat
 Her name no more, nor tell the vocal groves
 His fruitless sorrows. Next Maduces, fell,
 A Paphlagonian. Born amid the sound
 Of chasing surges, and the roar of winds,
 He o'er th' inhospitable fluxin foam
 Was wont from high Carambis' rock to ken
 Ill-fated keels, which cut the Pontic stream,
 Then with his dire associates through the deed
 For spoil and slaughter guide his savage prow.
 Him dogs will rend ashore. From Medus far,
 Their native current, two bold brothers died,
 Sisamnes and Tithraustes, potent lords
 Of rich domains. On these Mithrines, grey,
 Cilician prince, Lilæbus, who had left
 The balmy fragrance of Arabia's fields
 With Babylonian Tenagon expir'd.

The growing carnage Hyperanthes views
 Indignant, fierce in vengeful ardor strides
 Against the victor. Each his lance protends;
 But Asia's numbers interpose their shields,
 Solicitous to guard a prince rever'd:
 Or thither fortune whelm'd the tide of war,
 His term protracting for augmented fame.
 So two proud vessels, lab'ring on the foam,
 Present for battle their destructive beaks;
 When ridgy seas, by hurricanes upturn,

In mountainous commotion dash between
 And either deck, in black'ning tempest veil'd,
 Waft from its distant foe. More fiercely burn'd
 Thy spirit, mighty Sparta. Such dismay
 Relax'd thy foes, that each Barbarian heart
 Resign'd all hopes of victory. The steeds
 Of day were climbing their meridian height.
 Continu'd shouts of onset from the pass
 Resounded o'er the plain. Artuchus heard.
 When first the spreading tumult had alarm'd
 His distant quarter, starting from repose,
 He down the valley of Spercheos rush'd
 To aid his regal master. Asia's camp
 He found the seat of terror and despair.
 As in some fruitful clime, which late hath known
 The rage of winds and floods, although the storm
 Be heard no longer, and the deluge fled
 Still o'er the wasted region nature mourns
 In melancholy silence; through the grove
 With prostrate glories lie the stately oak,
 Th' uprooted elm and beech; the plain is spread
 With fragments, swept from villages o'erthrown,
 Around the pastures flocks and herds are cast
 In dreary piles of death: so Persia's host
 In terror mute one boundless scene displays
 Of devastation. Half-devour'd by fire,
 Her tall pavilions, and her martial cars
 Deform the wide encampment. Here in gore
 Her princes welter, nameless thousands there,
 Not victims all to Greeks. In gasping heaps
 Barbarians, mangled by Barbarians, shew'd
 The wild confusion of that direful night;
 When, wanting signals, and a leader's care,
 They rush'd on mutual slaughter. Xerxes' tent
 On its exalted summit, when the dawn
 First streak'd the orient sky, was wont to bear
 The golden form of Mithra, clos'd between
 Two lucid crystals. This the gen'ral host
 Observ'd, their awful signal to arrange

In arms compleat, and numberless to watch
 Their monarch's rising. This conspicuous blaze
 Artuchus places in th' accustom'd seat.
 As, after winds have ruffled by a storm
 The plumes of darkness, when her welcome face
 The morning lifts serene, each wary swain
 Collects his flock dispers'd; the neighing steed,
 The herds forsake their shelter: all return
 To well known pastures, and frequented streams:
 So now this cheering signal on the tent
 Revives each leader. From inglorious flight
 Their scatter'd bands they call, their wonted ground
 Resume, and hail Artuehus. From their swarms
 A force he culls. Thermopylæ he seeks.
 Fell shouts in horrid dissonance precede.

His phalanx swift Leonidas commands
 To circle backward from the Malian bay.
 Their order changes. Now, half-orb'd, they stand
 By Oeta's fence protected from behind,
 With either flank united to the rock.
 As by th' excelling architect dispos'd
 To shield some haven, a stupendous mole,
 Fram'd of the grove and quarry's mingled strength,
 In ocean's bosom penetrates afar:
 There, pride of art, immoveable it looks
 On Eolus and Neptune; there defies
 Those potent gods combin'd: unyielding thus,
 The Grecians stood a solid mass of war
 Against Artuchus, join'd with numbers new
 To Hyperanthes. In the foremost rank
 Leonidas his dreadful station held.
 Around him soon a spacious void was seen
 By flight, or slaughter in the Persian van.
 In gen'rous shame and wrath Artuchus burns,
 Discharging full at Lacedæmon's chief
 An iron-studded inace. It glanc'd aside,
 Turn'd by the massy buckler. Prone to earth
 The satrap fell. Alexander aim'd his point,

Which had transfix'd him prostrate on the rock,
 But for th' immediate succour, he obtain'd
 From faithful soldiers, lifting on their shields
 A chief belov'd. Not such Aleander's lot.
 An arrow wounds his heart. Supine he lies,
 The only Theban, who to Greece preserv'd
 Unviolated faith. Physician sage,
 On pure Cithæron healing herbs to cull
 Was he accusom'd, to expatiate o'er
 The Heliconian pastures, where no plants
 Of poison spring, of juice salubrious all,
 Which vipers, winding in their verdant track,
 Drink and expel the venom from their tooth,
 Dipt in the sweetness of that soil divine.
 On him the brave Artontes sinks in death,
 Renown'd through wide Bithynia, ne'er again,
 The clam'rous rites of Cybele to share;
 While echo murmurs through the hollow caves
 Of Berecynthian Dindymus. The strength
 Of Alpheus sent him to the shades of night.
 Ere from the dead was disengag'd the spear,
 Huge Abradates, glorying in his might,
 Surpassing all of Cissian race, advanc'd
 To grapple; planting firm his foremost step,
 The victor's throat he grasp'd. At Nemea's games
 The wrestler's chaplet Alpheus had obtain'd.
 He summons all his art. Oblique the stroke
 Of his swift foot supplants the Persian's heel,
 He, falling, clings by Alpheus' neck, and drags
 His foe upon him. In the Spartan's back
 Enrag'd Barbarians fix their thronging spears.
 To Abradates' chest the weapons pass;
 They rivet both in death. This Maron sees,
 This Polydorus, frowning. Victims, strewn
 Before their vengeance, hide their brother's corse:
 At length the gen'rous blood of Maron warms
 The sword of Hyperanthes. On the spear
 Of Polydorus falls the pond'rous axe
 Of Sacian Mardus. From the yielding wood

The steely point is sever'd. Undismay'd,
 The Spartan stoops to rear the knotted mace,
 Left by Artuchus; but thy fatal blade,
 Abrocomes, that dreadful instant watch'd
 To rend his op'ning side. Unconquer'd still,
 Swift he discharges on the Sacian's front
 A pond'rous blow, which burst the scatter'd brain.
 Down his own limbs meantime a torrent flows
 Of vital crimson. Smiling, he reflects
 On sorrow finish'd, on his Spartan name,
 Renew'd in lustre. Sudden to his side
 Springs Dithyrambus. Through th' uplifted arm
 Of Mindus, pointing a malignant dart
 Against the dying Spartan, he impell'd
 His spear. The point with violence unspent,
 Urg'd by such vigour, reach'd the Persian's throat
 Above his corselet. Polydorus stretch'd
 His languid hand to Thespia's friendly youth,
 Then bow'd his head in everlasting peace.
 While Mindus, wasted by his streaming wound,
 Beside him faints and dies. In flow'ring prime
 He, lord of Colchis, from a bride was torn
 His tyrant's hasty mandate to obey.
 She tow'rd the Euxien sends her plaintive sighs;
 She woos in tender piety the winds:
 Vain is their favor; they can never breathe
 On his returning sail. At once a croud
 Of eager Persians seize the victor's spear.
 One of his nervous hands retains it fast
 The other bares his falchion. Wounds and death
 He scatters round. Sosarmes feels his arm
 Lopt from the shoulder. Zatis leaves entwin'd
 His fingers round the long disputed lance.
 On Mardon's reins descends the pond'rous blade,
 Which half divides his body. Pheron strides
 Across the pointed ash. His weight o'ercomes
 The weary'd Thespian, who resigns his hold;
 But cleaves th' elate Barbarian to the brain.
 Abrocomes darts forward, shakes his steel,

Whose light'ning threatens death. The wary Greek
 Wards with his sword the well-directed stroke,
 Then, closing, throws the Persian. Now what aid
 Of mortal force, or interposing heav'n
 Preserves the eastern hero? Lo! the friend
 Of Teribazus. Eager to avenge
 That lov'd, that lost companion, and defend
 A brother's life, beneath the sinewy arm,
 Outstretch'd, the sword of Hyperanthes pass'd
 Through Dithyrambus. All the strings of life
 At once relax; nor fame, nor Greece demand
 More from his valour. Prostrate now he lies
 In glories, ripen'd on his blooming head.
 Him shall the Thespian maidens in their songs
 Record once loveliest of the youthful train,
 The gentle, wise, beneficent and brave,
 Grace of his lineage, and his country's boast,
 Now fall'n. Elysium to his parting soul
 Uncloses. So the cedar, which supreme
 Among the groves of Libanus hath tow'rd,
 Uprooted, low'rs his graceful top, prefer'd
 For dignity of growth some royal dome,
 Or heav'n devoted fabric to adorn.
 Diomedon bursts forward. Round his friend
 He heaps destruction. Troops of wailing ghosts
 Attend thy shade, fall'n hero! Long prevail'd
 His furious arm in vengeance uncontroull'd;
 Till four Assyrians on his shelving spear,
 Ere from a Cassian's prostrate body freed,
 Their pond'rous maces all discharge. It broke.
 Still with a shatter'd truncheon he maintains
 Unequal fight. Impetuous through his eye
 The well aim'd fragment penetrates the brain
 Of one bold warrior; there the splinter'd wood,
 Infix'd, remains. The hero last unsheaths
 His falchion broad. A second sees aghast
 His entrails open'd. Sever'd from a third,
 The head, steel-cas'd, descends. In blood is roll'd

The grizly beard. That effort breaks the blade
 Short from its hilt. The Grecian stands disarm'd,
 The fourth, Astaspes, proud Chaldæan lord,
 Is nigh. He lifts his iron-plated mace.
 'This, while a cluster of auxiliar friends
 Hang on the Grecian shield, to earth depress'd,
 Loads with unerring blows the batter'd helm;
 Till on the ground Diomedon extends
 His mighty limbs. So, weaken'd by the force
 Of some tremendous engine, which the hand
 Of Mars impells, a citadel, high-tow'rd,
 Whence darts and fire and ruins long have aw'd
 Begirding legions, yields at last, and spreads
 Its disuniting ramparts on the ground;
 Joy fills th' assailants, and the battle's tide
 Whelms o'er the widening breach: the Persian thus
 O'er the late-fear'd Diomedon advanc'd
 Against the Grecian remnant: when behold
 Leonidas. At once their ardour froze.
 He had awhile behind his friends retir'd,
 Oppress'd by labour. Pointless was his spear,
 His buckler cleft. As, overworn by storms,
 A vessel steers to some protecting bay;
 Then, soon as timely gales, inviting, curl
 The azure floods, to Neptune shews again
 Her masts apparell'd fresh in shrouds and sails,
 Which court the vig'rous wind: so Sparta's king,
 In strength repair'd, a spear and buckler new
 Presents to Asia. From her bleeding ranks
 Hydarnes, urg'd by destiny, approach'd.
 He, proudly vaunting, left an infant race,
 A spouse lamenting on the distant verge
 Of Bactrian Ochus. Victory in vain
 He, parting, promis'd. Wanton hope will sport
 Round his cold heart no longer. Grecian spoils,
 Imagin'd triumphs, pictur'd on his mind,
 Fate will erase forever. Through the targe,
 The thick-mail'd corselet his divided chest
 Of bony strength admits the hostile spear.

Leonidas draws back the steely point,
 Bent and enfeebled by the forceful blow.
 Meantime within his buckler's rim, unseen,
 Amphistreus stealing, in th' ungarded flank
 His dagge: struck. In slow effusion ooz'd
 The blood, from Hercules deriv'd; but death
 Not yet had reach'd his mark. Th' indignant king
 Gripes irresistibly the Persian's throat.
 He drags him prostrate. False, corrupt and base,
 Fallacious, fell, preeminent was he
 Among tyrannic satraps. Phrygia pin'd
 Beneath the oppression of his ruthless sway.
 Her soil had once been fruitful. Once her towns
 Were populous and rich. The direful change
 To naked fields and crumbling roofs declar'd,
 Th' accurs'd Amphistreus govern'd. As the spear
 Of Tyrian Cadmus rivetted to earth
 The pois'nous dragon, whose infectious breath
 Had blasted all Bœotia; so the king,
 On prone Amphistreus trampling, to the rock
 Nails down the tyrant. and the fractur'd staff
 Leaves in his panting body. But the blood,
 Great hero, dropping from the wound, revives
 The hopes of Persia. Thy unyielding arm
 Upholds the conflict still. Against thy shield
 The various weapons shiver, and thy feet
 With glitt'ring points surround. The Lydian sword,
 The Persian dagger leave their shatter'd hilts;
 Bent is the Caspian scymeter; the lance,
 The javelin, dart and arrow all combine
 Their fruitless efforts. From Alcides sprung,
 Thou stand'st unshaken like a Thracian hill,
 Like Rhodope, or Hæmus; where in vain
 The thund'rer plants his livid bolt; in vain
 Keen-pointed lightnings pierce th' encrusted snow;
 And winter, beating with eternal war,
 Shakes from his dreary wings discordant storms,
 Chill sleet, and clatt'ring hail. Advancing bold,
 His rapid lance Abrocomes in vain

Aims at the forehead of Laconia's chief.
 He, not unguarded, rears his active blade
 Athwart the dang'rous blow, whose fury wastes
 Above his crest in air. Then, swiftly wheel'd,
 The pond'rous weapon cleaves the Persian's knee
 Sheer through the parted bone. He sidelong falls.
 Crush'd on the ground beneath contending feet,
 Great Xerxes' brother yields the last remains
 Of tortur'd life. Leonidas persists;
 Till Agis calls Dieneces, alarms
 Demophilus, Megistias: they o'er piles
 Of Allarodian and Sasperian dead
 Haste to their leader: they before him raise
 The brazen bulwark of their massy shields.
 The foremost rank of Asia stands and bleeds;
 The rest recoil: but Hyperanthes swift
 From band to band his various host prevades,
 Their drooping hopes rekindles, in the brave
 New fortitude excites: the frigid heart
 Of fear he warms. Astaspes first obeys,
 Vain of his birth, from ancient Belus drawn,
 Proud of his wealthy stores, his stately domes,
 More proud in recent victory: his might
 Had foil'd Platæa's chief. Before the front
 He strides impetuous. His triumphant mace
 Against the brave Dieneces he bends.
 The weighty blow bears down th' opposing shield,
 And breaks the Spartan's shoulder. Idle hangs
 The weak defence, and loads th' inactive arm,
 Depriv'd of ev'ry function. Agis bares
 His vengeful blade. At two well levell'd strokes
 Of both his hands, high brandishing the mace,
 He mutilates the foe. A Sacian chief
 Springs on the victor. Jaxartes' banks
 To this brave savage gave his name and birth:
 His look erect, his bold deportment spoke
 A gallant spirit, but untam'd by laws,
 With dreary wilds familiar, and a race
 Of rude Barbarians, horrid, as their clime.

From its direction glanc'd the Spartan spear,
Which upward borne, o'erturn'd his iron cone.
Black o'er his forehead fall the naked locks;
They aggravate his fury: while his foe
Repeats the stroke, and penetrates his chest.
Th' intrepid Sacian through his breast and back
Receives the grinding steel. Along the staff
He writhes his tortur'd body; in his grasp
A barbed arrow from his quiver shakes;
Deep in the streaming throat of Agis hides
The deadly point; then grimly smiles and dies.

From him fate hastens to a nobler prey,
Dieneces. His undefended frame
The shield abandons, sliding from his arm.
His breast is gor'd by javelins. On the foe
He hurls them back, extracted from his wounds.
Life, yielding slow to destiny, at length
Forsakes his riven heart; nor less in death
Thermopylæ he graces, than before
By martial deeds and conduct. What can stem
The barb'rous torrent? Agis bleeds. His spear
Lies useless, irrecoverably plung'd
In Jaxartes' body. Low reclines
Dieneces. Leonidas himself,
O'erlabour'd, wounded, with his dinted sword
The rage of war can exercise no more.
One last one glorious effort age performs.
Demophilus, Megistias join their might.
They check the tide of conquest; while the spear
Of slain Dieneces to Sparta's chief
The fainting Agis bears. The pointed ash,
In that dire hand for battle rear'd anew,
Blasts ev'ry Persian's valour. Back in heaps
They roll, confounded, by their gen'ral's voice
In vain exhorted longer to endure
The ceaseless waste of that unconquer'd arm.
So, when the giants from Olympus chac'd
Th' inferior gods, themselves in terror shun'd

Th' incessant streams of lightning, where the hand
 Of heav'n's great father with eternal might
 Sustain'd the dreadful conflict. O'er the field
 Awhile Bellona gives the battle rest;
 When Thespia's leader and Megistias drop
 At either side of Lacedæmon's king.
 Beneath the weight of years and labour bend
 The hoary warriors. Not a groan molests
 Their parting spirits; but in death's calm night
 All-silent sinks each venerable head;
 Like aged oaks, whose deep-descending roots
 Had pierc'd resistless through a craggy slope;
 There during three long centuries have brav'd
 Malignant Eurus, and the boist'rous north;
 Till bare and sapless by corroding time
 Without a blast their mossy trunks recline
 Before their parent hill. Not one remains,
 But Agis, near Leonidas, whose hand
 The last kind office to his friend performs,
 Extracts the Sacian's arrow. Life, releas'd
 Pours forth in crimson floods; O Agis, pale
 Thy placid features, rigid are thy limbs;
 They lose their graces. Dim'd, thy eyes reveal
 The native goodness of thy heart no more
 Yet other graces spring. The noble corse
 Leonidas surveys. A pause he finds
 To mark, how lovely are the patriot's wounds,
 And see those honors on the breast, he lov'd.

But Hyperanthes from the trembling ranks
 Of Asia tow'rs, inflexibly resolv'd
 The Persian glory to redeem, or fall.
 The Spartan, worn by toil, his languid arm
 Uplifts once more. He waits the dauntless prince.
 The heroes now stand adverse. Each awhile
 Restrains his valour. Each, admiring, views
 His godlike foe. At length their brandish'd points
 Provoke the contest. fated soon to close
 The long-continu'd horrors of the day.

Fix'd in amaze and fear, the Asian throng,
 Unmov'd and silent, on their bucklers pause.
 Thus on the wastes of India, while the earth
 Beneath him groans, the elephant is seen,
 His huge proboscis writhing, to defy
 The strong rhinoceros, whose pond'rous horn
 Is newly whetted on a rock. Anon
 Each hideous bulk encounters. Earth her groan
 Redoubles. Trembling, from their covert gaze
 The savage inmates of surrounding woods
 In distant terror. By the vary'd art
 Of either chief the dubious combat long
 Its great event retarded. Now his lance
 Far through the hostile shield Laconia's king
 Impell'd. Aside the Persian swung his arm.
 Beneath it pass'd the weapon, which his targe
 Encumber'd. Hopes of conquest and renown
 Elate his courage. Sudden he directs
 His rapid javelin to the Spartan's throat.
 But he his wary buckler upward rais'd
 Which o'er his shoulder turn'd the glancing steel;
 For one last effort then his scatter'd strength
 Collecting, levell'd with resistless force
 The massive orb, and dash'd its brazen verge
 Full on the Persian's forehead. Down he sunk,
 Without a groan expiring, as o'erwhelm'd
 Beneath a marble fragment, from its seat
 Heav'd by a whirlwind, sweeping o'er the ridge
 Of some aspiring mansion. Gen'rous prince!
 What could his valour more? His single might
 He met h'd with great Leonidas, and fell
 Before his native bands. The Spartan king
 Now stands alone. In heaps his slaughter'd friends,
 All stretch'd around him, lie. The distant foes
 Show'r on his head innumerable darts.
 From various sluices gush the vital floods;
 They stain his fainting limbs. Nor yet with pain
 His brow is clouded; but those beauteous wounds,
 The sacred pledges of his own renown,

And Sparta's safety, in serenest joy
His closing eye contemplates. Fame can twine
No brighter laurels round his glorious head;
His virtue more to labour fate forbids,
And lays him now in honorable rest
To seal his country's liberty by death.

THE END. .

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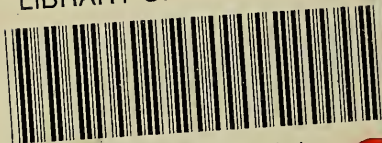
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